

Also by Frederick Forsyth

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THE FIST OF GOD
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Frederick Forsyth



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For Sandy

CAST OF CHARACTERS

APPEARING THROUGHOUT

JASON MONK	Former agent, Central Intelligence Agency
SIR NIGEL IRVINE	Former Chief, British Secret Intelligence Service
IGOR V. KOMAROV	Leader, ultra-right-wing Russian UPF (Union of Patriotic Forces) Party
COL. ANATOLI V. GRISHIN	Ex-KGB, Chief of Security for UPF
IVAN MARKOV	Acting President after July 1999
UMAR GUNAYEV	KGB officer, Oman, later mafia boss, Moscow

APPEARING IN PART ONE

The Russians

GENNADY ZYUGANOV	Leader, neo-Communist Party, Russia
JOSEF CHERKASSOV	President of Russia until July 1999
BORIS KUZNETSOV	Head of Propaganda, UPF Party
LEONID ZAITSEV	Office cleaner, UPF Party headquarters
NIKITA AKOPOV	Confidential private secretary to Igor Komarov
NIKOLAI ILYICH TURKIN	KGB officer, recruited by Jason Monk
COL. STANISLAV ANDROSOV	Resident, KGB, Soviet Embassy, Washington
OLEG GORDIEVSKY	KGB Colonel, recruited by British SIS (1985)

BRIAN WORTHING

Editor, *Daily Telegraph*,
London

MARK JEFFERSON

Star columnist, *Daily Telegraph*

LADY IRVINE

Wife of Sir Nigel Irvine

CIARAN

Former Special Forces soldier

MITCH

Former Special Forces soldier

SIR WILLIAM PALMER

Permanent Under-Secretary,
Foreign Office

The Americans

CAREY JORDAN

Former Deputy Director
(Operations), CIA, Langley

ALDRICH AMES

Former CIA officer and traitor

KEN MULGREW

Former CIA official and friend
of Ames

HARRY GAUNT

Former Head of Soviet
Division, CIA, Langley

SAUL NATHANSON

Financier, Washington and
Wyoming

APPEARING IN PART TWO

ALEXEI II

Patriarch of Moscow and All
the Russias

FR MAXIM KLIMOVSKY

Valet/butler to the Patriarch

DMITRI BORODIN

Detective, Homicide, Moscow
Militia

BRIAN VINCENT, aka MARKS

Former Special Forces soldier

GEN. NIKOLAI NIKOLAYEV

Retired Soviet tank veteran

DR LANCELOT PROBYN

Genealogist of the College of
Arms, London

FR GREGOR RUSAKOV

Itinerant revivalist preacher

ASLAN, MAGOMED, SHARIF

Chechen gangsters and body-
guards

GEN. YURI DROZDOV

Former spymaster, KGB

LEONID BERNSTEIN

Chairman, Moskovsky Federal
Bank

ANTON GUROV

Senior executive, Commercial
TV, Moscow

GEN. VALENTIN PETROVSKY	Chief, Organized Crime Control Department, Moscow Militia
MAJ.-GEN. MISHA ANDREYEV	Commander, Tamanskaya Division
GEN. VYACHESLAV BUTOV	Deputy Defence Minister, Moscow
GEN. SERGEI KORIN	Commander, Presidential Security Guard, Kremlin

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

It was the summer when the price of a small loaf of bread topped a million roubles.

It was the summer of the third consecutive year of crop failures and the second of hyper-inflation.

It was the summer when in the back alleys of the far-away provincial towns the first Russians began dying of malnutrition.

It was the summer when the president collapsed in his limousine too far from help to be saved, and an old office cleaner stole a document.

After that nothing would ever be the same.

It was the summer of 1999.

It was hot that afternoon, oppressively hot, and it took several blasts on the horn before the gatekeeper scurried from his hut to haul open the timber doors of the Cabinet building.

The presidential bodyguard dropped his window to call to the man to shape up as the long black Mercedes 600 eased under the arch and out into Staraya Ploshchad. The wretched gatekeeper threw up what he hoped passed for a salute as the second car, a Russian Chaika with four more bodyguards, followed the limousine. Then they were gone.

In the back of the Mercedes President Cherkassov sat alone, slumped in thought. In the front were his militia driver and the personal bodyguard assigned to him from the Alpha Group.

As the last drab outskirts of Moscow gave way to the fields and trees of the open countryside, the mood of the President of Russia was one of profound gloom, as well it might be. He had been three years in the office he had won after stepping in to replace the ailing Boris Yeltsin, and as he watched his country crashing into

destitution, they had been the three most miserable years of his life.

Back in the winter of 1995 when he had been the prime minister, appointed by Yeltsin himself as a 'technocrat' premier to lick the economy into shape, the Russian people had gone to the polls to elect a new Parliament, or Duma.

The Duma elections were important but not vital. In the preceding years more and more power had passed from the Parliament to the presidency, most of this process the work of Boris Yeltsin. By the winter of 1995 the big Siberian, who four years earlier had straddled a tank in the attempted coup of August 1991, earned the admiration of not only Russia but also the West as the great fighter for democracy, and seized the presidency for himself, had become a broken reed.

Recovering from a second heart attack in three months, puffing and bloated by medications, he watched the parliamentary elections from a clinic in the Sparrow Hills, formerly the Lenin Hills, north-east of Moscow, and saw his own political protégés hammered into third place among the delegates. That this was not as crucial as it might have been in a Western democracy was largely due to the fact that because of Yeltsin, the great majority of actual power lay in the hands of the president himself. Like the United States, Russia had an executive presidency, but unlike the United States, the web of checks and balances that the Congress can impose upon the White House did not exist. Yeltsin could effectively rule by decree, and did.

But the parliamentary elections did at least show which way the wind was blowing and give an indication of the trend for the much more important presidential elections slated for June 1996.

The new force on the political horizon in the winter of 1995 was, ironically enough, the Communists. After seventy years of Communist tyranny, five years of Gorbachev reforms, and five years of Yeltsin, the

Russian people began to look back with nostalgia to the old days.

The Communists, under their leader Gennady Zyuganov, painted a rosy picture of the way things used to be: guaranteed jobs, assured salaries, affordable food and law and order. No mention was made of the despotism of the KGB, the Gulag archipelago of slave labour camps, or the suppression of all freedom of movement and expression.

The Russian voters were already in a state of profound disillusion with the two once-heralded saviours: capitalism and democracy. The second word was uttered with contempt. For many Russians, looking around at the all-embracing corruption and pandemic crime, it had all been a big lie. When the parliamentary votes were counted, the crypto-Communists had the biggest single bloc of deputies in the Duma and the right to appoint the speaker.

At the other extreme were their apparently diametric opposites, the neo-Fascists of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy leading the ironically named Liberal Democratic Party. In the 1991 elections this crude demagogue with his taste for bizarre behaviour and scatological expressions, had done amazingly well, but his star was falling. Nevertheless it had not fallen enough to rob him of the second largest bloc of deputies.

In the middle were the political centre parties, clinging to the economic and social reforms they had introduced. They came in third.

But the real effect of those elections was to prepare the ground for the presidential race of 1996. There had been forty-three separate parties contesting the Duma elections and most of the leaders of the main parties realized that they would be best served by a programme of coalescence.

Before the summer the crypto-Communists allied with their natural friends...

of the old USSR. The leader remained Zyuganov.

In the ultra-right wing moves for unification were also afoot, but were fiercely resisted by Zhirinovsky. Vlad the Mad reckoned he could win the presidency without help from the other right-wing factions.

Russian presidential elections, like the French, are held in two parts. In the first round all candidates compete against one another. Only those candidates coming in first and second qualify for the run-off vote of the second round. Coming in third is no use. Zhirinovsky came in third. The smarter political thinkers on the extreme right were furious with him.

The dozen parties of the centre united, more or less, into the Democratic Alliance, with the key question throughout the spring of '96 whether Boris Yeltsin would be fit enough to stand for, and win, the presidency again. His downfall would later be ascribed by historians to a single word – Chechnya.

Exasperated to breaking-point twelve months earlier, Yeltsin had launched the full might of the Russian army and air force against a small, warlike mountain tribe whose self-appointed leader was insisting on complete independence from Moscow. There was nothing new about trouble from the Chechens – their resistance went back to the days of the tsars and beyond. They had somehow survived pogroms launched against them by several tsars, and by the cruellest tyrant of them all, Josef Stalin. Somehow they had survived the repeated devastation of their tiny homeland, the deportations and genocide, and continued to fight back.

Launching the full might of the Russian armed forces against the Chechens was an impetuous decision that led not to a quick and glorious victory but to the utter destruction – all on camera and in glorious Technicolor – of the Chechen capital of Grozny and to the endless train of Russian soldiers in body bags coming back from the campaign.

With their capital reduced to rubble, but still armed to the teeth with weapons largely sold to them by corrupt

Russian generals, the Chechens took to the hills they know so well and refused to be flushed out. The same Russian army that had met its inglorious Vietnam in attempting to invade and hold Afghanistan had now created a second one in the wild foothills of the Caucasus Range.

If Boris Yeltsin had launched his Chechen campaign to prove he was a strong man in the traditional Russian mould, it became a gesture that had failed. All through 1995 he lusted for his final victory, and always it eluded him. As they saw their young sons coming back from the Caucasus in sacks, the mood of the Russian people turned viciously anti-Chechen. It also turned against the man who could not deliver them a victory.

After gruelling personal effort, Yeltsin re-won his presidency by a whisker and after a run off. But a year later he was gone. The mantle passed to the technocrat Josef Cherkassov, leader of the Russian Homeland Party, by then part of the broad Democratic Alliance.

Cherkassov seemed to start well. He retained the benign good wishes of the West, and more importantly, its financial credits to keep the Russian economy in some kind of shape. Heeding Western advice, he negotiated at last a peace deal with Chechnya, and although the vengeful Russians hated the idea of the Chechens getting away with their rebellion, bringing the soldiers home was popular.

But things began to go wrong within eighteen months. The causes for this were twofold: first, that the depredations of the Russian mafia simply became too burdensome at last for the Russian economy to bear and second, yet another foolish military adventure. In late 1997 Siberia, home of 90 per cent of Russian wealth, threatened to secede.

Siberia was the least-tamed of all Russia's provinces. Yet under her permafrost, barely even exploited, were oil and gas deposits that made even Saudi Arabia look deprived. Added to that were gold, diamonds, bauxite, manganese, tungsten, nickel, and platinum. By the late

nineties, Siberia was still the last frontier on the planet.

Reports began to reach Moscow that Japanese and mainly South Korean yakuza emissaries were circulating in Siberia urging secession. President Cherkassov, ill-advised by his circle of sycophants and seemingly oblivious of his own predecessor's mistakes in Chechnya, sent the army east. The move provoked a double catastrophe. After twelve months without a military solution he had to negotiate a deal granting the Siberians far more autonomy and control over the proceeds of their own wealth than they had ever had. Secondly, the adventure triggered hyper-inflation.

The government tried to print its way out of trouble. By the summer of 1999 the days of five-thousand roubles to the dollar of the mid-nineties were memory. The wheat crop from the black earth country of the Kuban had failed twice, in '97 and '98, and the crop from Siberia was delayed until it rotted because the partisans blew away the rail tracks. In the cities bread prices spiralled. President Cherkassov clung to office but was clearly no longer in power.

In the countryside, which should at the least have been growing enough food to feed itself, the conditions were at their worst. Underfunded, undermanned, their infrastructure collapsing, the farms stood idle, their rich soil producing weeds. Trains stopping at wayside halts were besieged by peasants, mainly elderly, offering furniture, clothes, and bric-a-brac to the carriage windows for money or, even better, food. There were few takers.

In Moscow, the capital and showcase of the nation, the destitute slept out on the quays along the Moskva and in the back alleys. The police – called the militia in Russia – having virtually abandoned the struggle against crime, tried to pick them up and hustle them onto trains heading back where they came from. But more kept arriving, seeking work, food, relief. Many of them would be reduced to begging and dying on the streets of Moscow.

In the early spring of 1999 the West finally gave up pouring subsidies into the bottomless pit, and the foreign

investors, even those in partnership with the mafia, pulled out. The Russian economy, like a war refugee raped too many times, lay down by the side of the road and died of despair.

This was the gloomy prospect that President Cherkassov contemplated as he drove that hot summer's day out to his weekend retreat.

The driver knew the road to the country dacha, out beyond Usovo on the banks of the Moskva River, where the air was cooler under the trees. Years ago the fat cats of the Soviet Politburo had had their dachas in the woods along this bend of the river. Much had changed in Russia, but not that much.

Traffic was light because gasoline was expensive and the trucks they passed belched great plumes of pure black smoke. After Arkhangelskoye they crossed the bridge and turned along the road beside the river, which flowed quietly in the summer haze towards the city behind them.

Five minutes later President Cherkassov felt himself to be short of breath. Although the air-conditioning was at full blast he pushed the button to open the rear window next to his face and let nature's air blow over him. It was hotter, and made his breathing little better. Behind the partition screen neither driver nor bodyguard had noticed. The turn-off to Peredelkino came up on the right. As they passed it, the President of Russia leaned to his left and fell sideways across his seat.

The first thing the driver noticed was that the president's head had disappeared from his rear-view mirror. He muttered something to the bodyguard, who turned his torso round to look. In a second the Mercedes slewed into the side of the road.

Behind, the Chaika did the same. The head of the security detail, a former colonel of Spetsnaz, leapt from the front passenger seat and ran forward. Others came out from their seats, guns drawn, and formed a protective ring. They did not know what had happened.

The colonel reached the Mercedes, where the

bodyguard had the rear door open and was leaning in. The colonel yanked him backwards to see better. The president was half on his back, half on his side, both hands clutching at his chest, eyes closed, breathing in short grunts.

The nearest hospital with top-of-the-range intensive care facilities was the Number One State Clinic miles away in the Sparrow Hills. The colonel got into the rear seat beside the stricken Cherkassov and ordered the driver to hang a U-turn and head back for the orbital beltway. White-faced, the driver did so. From his portable phone the colonel raised the clinic and ordered an ambulance to meet them halfway.

The rendezvous was half an hour later in the middle of the divided highway. Paramedics transferred the unconscious man from the limousine to the ambulance and went to work as the three-vehicle convoy raced to the clinic.

Once there the president came under the care of the senior cardiac specialist on duty and was rushed to the ICU. They used what they had, the latest and the best, but they were still too late. The line across the screen of the monitor refused to budge, maintaining a long straight line and a high-pitched buzz. At ten minutes past four the senior physician straightened up and shook his head. The man with the defibrillator stood back.

The colonel punched some numbers into his mobile phone. Someone answered at the third ring. The colonel said:

'Get me the office of the Prime Minister.'

Six hours later, in the West Indies, far out on the rolling surface of the ocean, the *Foxy Lady* turned for home. Down on the afterdeck Julius the boatman hauled in the lines, detached the wire traces and stowed the rods. It had been a full-day charter and a good one.

While Julius wound the traces and their brilliant plastic lures into neat circles for storing in the tackle box,

the American couple popped a couple of cans of beer and sat contentedly under the awning to slake their thirsts.

In the fish locker were two huge wahoo close to forty pounds each and half a dozen big dorado that a few hours earlier had been lurking under a weed patch ten miles away.

The skipper on the upper bridge checked his course for the islands and eased the throttles forward from trolling speed to fast cruise. He reckoned he would be sliding into Turtle Cove in less than an hour.

The *Foxy Lady* seemed to know her work was almost over and her berth in the sheltered harbour up the quay from the Tiki Hut was waiting for her. She tucked in her tail, lifted her nose, and the deep-V hull began to slice through the blue water. Julius dunked a bucket in the passing water and sluiced the afterdeck yet again.

When Zhirinovsky had been leader of the Liberal Democrats, the party headquarters were in a shabby slum of a building in Fish Alley, just off Sretenka Street. Visitors not aware of the strange ways of Vlad the Mad had been amazed to discover how tawdry it was. The plaster peeling, the windows displaying two flyblown posters of the demagogue, the place had not seen a wet mop in a decade. Inside the chipped black door, visitors found a gloomy lobby with a booth selling T-shirts with the leader's portrait on the front and racks of the requisite black leather jackets worn by his supporters.

Up the uncarpeted stairs, clothed in gloomy brown paint, was the first half-landing, with a grilled window where a surly guard asked the caller's business. Only if this was satisfactory could he then ascend to the tacky rooms above where Zhirinovsky held court when he was in town. Hard rock boomed throughout the building. This was the way the eccentric fascist had preferred to keep the headquarters, on the grounds that the image spoke of a man of the people rather than one of the fat cats. But Zhirinovsky was long gone now, and the Liberal Democratic Party had been amalgamated with the other

ultra-right and neo-fascist parties into the Union of Patriotic Forces.

Its undisputed leader was Igor Komarov and he was a completely different kind of man. Nevertheless, seeing the basic logic of showing the poor and dispossessed, whose votes he sought, that the Union of Patriotic Forces permitted itself no expensive indulgences, he kept the Fish Alley building, but maintained his own private offices elsewhere.

Trained as an engineer, Komarov had worked under Communism but not for it, until halfway through the Yeltsin period he had decided to enter politics. He had chosen the Liberal Democratic Party, and though he privately despised Zhirinovsky for his drunken excesses and constant sexual innuendo, his quiet work in the background had brought him to the politburo, the inner council of the party. From here, in a series of covert meetings with leaders of other ultra-right parties, he had stitched together the alliance of all the right-wing elements in Russia into the UPF. Presented with an accomplished fact, Zhirinovsky grudgingly accepted its existence and fell into the trap of chairing its first plenum.

The plenum passed a resolution requiring his resignation and ditched him. Komarov declined to take the leadership but ensured that it went to a nonentity, a man with no charisma and little organizational talent. A year later it was easy to play upon the sense of disappointment in the Union's governing council, ease out the stopgap, and take the leadership himself. The appeal and career of Vladimir Zhirinovsky had ended.

Within two years after the 1996 elections the crypto-Communists began to fade. Their supporters had always been predominantly middle-aged and elderly and they had trouble raising funds. Without big-banker support the membership fees were no longer enough. The Socialist Union's money and its appeal dwindled.

By 1998 Komarov was undisputed leader of the ultra-right and in prime position to play upon the growing

despair of the Russian people, of which there was plenty.

Yet among all this poverty and destitution there was also ostentatious wealth to make the eyes blink. Those who had money had mountains of it, much of it in foreign currency. They swept through the streets in long stretch limousines, American or German, for the Zil factory had gone out of production, often accompanied by motorcycle outriders to clear a path and usually with a second car of bodyguards racing along behind.

In the lobby of the Bolshoi, in the bars and banquet-halls of the Metropol and the National, they could be seen each evening, accompanied by their hookers trailing sable, mink, the aroma of Parisian scent and glittering with diamonds. These were the fat cats, fatter than ever.

In the Duma the delegates shouted and waved order papers and passed resolutions. 'It reminds me,' said an English foreign cor-respondent, 'of all I ever heard of the last days of the Weimar Republic.'

The one man who seemed to offer a possible ray of hope was Igor Komarov.

In the two years since he had taken power in the party of the right, Komarov had surprised most observers, both inside and outside Russia. If he had been content to remain simply a superb political organizer, he would have been just another apparatchik. But he changed. Or so observers thought. More probably he had a talent he had been content to keep hidden.

Komarov made his mark as a passionate and charismatic popular orator. When he was on the podium those who recalled the quiet, soft-spoken, fastidious private man were amazed. He seemed transformed. His voice increased and deepened to a rolling baritone, using all the many expressions and inflections of the Russian language to great effect. He could drop his tone almost to a whisper so that even with microphones the audience had to strain to catch the words, then rise to a ringing peroration that brought the crowds to their feet and had even the sceptics cheering.

He quickly mastered the area of his own speciality, the living crowd. He avoided the televised fireside chat or television interview, aware that though those might work in the West, they were not for Russia. Russians rarely invited people into their homes, let alone the entire nation.

Nor was he interested in being trapped by hostile questions. Every speech he made was stage-managed, but it worked. He addressed only rallies of the party faithful, with the cameras under the control of his own film-making team commanded by the brilliant young director, Litvinov. Cut and edited, these films were released for nationwide television viewing on his own terms, to be aired complete and unabridged. This he could achieve by buying TV time instead of relying upon the vagaries of newscasters.

His theme was always the same and always popular — Russia, Russia and again Russia. He inveighed against the foreigners whose international conspiracies had brought Russia to her knees. He clamoured for the expulsion of all the 'blacks', the popular Russian way of referring to Armenians, Georgians, Azeris and others from the south, many of whom were known to be among the richest of the criminal profiteers. He cried out for justice for the poor, downtrodden Russian people who would one day rise with him to restore the glories of the past and sweep away the filth that clogged the streets of the motherland.

He promised all things to all men. For the out-of-work there would be employment, a fair day's wage for a good day's work, with food on the table and dignity again. For those with obliterated life-savings there would be honest currency again and something to put by for a comfortable old age. For those who wore the uniform of the *rodina*, the ancient motherland, there would be pride again to wipe out the humiliations visited upon them by cravens elevated to high office by foreign capital.

And they heard him. By radio and television they heard him across the wide steppes. The soldiers of the

once-great Russian army heard him, huddled under canvas, expelled from Afghanistan, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in an endless series of retreats from empire.

The peasants heard him in their cottages and *izbas*, scattered across the vast landscape. The ruined middle classes heard him among the bits of furniture they had not pawned for food on the table and a few coals in the hearth. Even the industrial bosses heard him and dreamed that their furnaces might one day roar again. And when he promised them that the angel of death would walk among the crooks and gangsters who had raped their beloved Mother Russia, they loved him.

In the spring of 1999, at the suggestion of his PR adviser, a very clever young man who had graduated from an American Ivy League college, Igor Komarov granted a series of private interviews. Young Boris Kuznetsov picked the candidates well, mainly legislators and journalists of the conservative wing across America and Western Europe. The purpose of the reception was to calm their fears.

As a campaign, it worked brilliantly. Most arrived expecting to find what they had been told they would find: a wild-eyed ultra-right demagogue, variously dubbed racist or neo-fascist or both.

They found themselves talking to a thoughtful, well-mannered man in a sober suit. As Komarov spoke no English, it was his PR aid who sat by his side, both guiding the interview and interpreting. Whenever his adored leader said something he knew might be ill-interpreted in the West, Kuznetsov simply translated it into something much more acceptable in English. No-one noticed, for he had ensured that none of the visitors understood Russian.

Thus Komarov could explain that, as practising politicians, we all have constituencies and we cannot needlessly offend them if we wish to be elected. Thus, we may on occasions have to say what we know they want to hear, even though to achieve it may be r

harder than we pretend. And the senators nodded understandingly.

He explained that in the older Western democracies people broadly understood that social discipline began with oneself, so that externally imposed discipline, by the State, might be the lighter. But where all forms of self-discipline had broken down, the State might have to be firmer than would be acceptable in the West. And the MPs nodded understandingly.

To the conservative journalists he explained that the restoration of a sound currency could simply not be achieved without some draconian measures against crime and corruption in the short term. The journalists wrote that Igor Komarov was a man who would listen to reason on matters economic and political, such as co-operation with the West. He might be too far right for acceptance in a European or American democracy, and his powerful demagoguery too frightening for Western palates, but he might well be the man for Russia in her present straits. In any case, he would almost certainly win the presidential election in June 2000. The polls showed that. The far-sighted would be wise to support him.

In chancelleries, embassies, ministries, and board-rooms across the West, the cigar smoke rose to the ceilings and heads nodded.

In the northern sector of the central area of Moscow, just inside the boulevard ring road and halfway down Kiselev Boulevard, is a side-street. Midway along the west side of the street there is a small park, about half an acre in size, surrounded on three sides by windowless buildings and protected at the front by ten-foot-high green steel sheets, over the top of which the tips of a line of conifers can just be seen. Set in the steel wall is a double gate, also steel.

The small park is in fact the garden of a superb pre-revolutionary town house or mansion, exquisitely restored in the mid-1980s. Although the interior is

modern and functional, the classical façade is painted in pastel shades, the plasterwork over doors and windows picked out in white. This was the real headquarters of Igor Komarov.

A visitor at the front gate would be in full view of a camera atop the wall and would announce himself via an intercom. He would be talking to a guard in a hut just within the gate, who would check with the security office inside the house.

If the gates opened, a car would roll forward for ten yards before stopping at a row of spikes. The steel gates, sliding sideways on rollers, would close automatically behind it. The guard would then emerge to check identification papers. If these were in order, he would retire to his hut and press an electric control. The spikes would recede and the car could go forward to the gravel forecourt where more guards would be waiting.

From either side of the house chain-link fencing ran to the edges of the compound, bolted firmly to the surrounding walls. Behind the chain-link were the dogs. There were two teams, and each responded only to one dog handler. The handlers worked alternate nights. After dark, gates in the fencing were opened and the dogs had the run of the whole compound, front and back. Thereafter the gate-guard stayed inside his hut, and in the event of a late visitor he would have to contact the handler to call off the dogs.

In order to avoid losing too many of the staff to the dogs, there was an underground passage at the rear of the building, leading to a narrow alley which itself led to Kiselny Boulevard. This passage had three keypad doors: one inside the house, one at the street, and one midway. This was the access and egress for deliveries and shift.

At night, when the political staff had all left and the dogs prowled the grounds, two security men remained on duty inside the house. They had a room of their own, with a TV and facilities for snacks, but no beds because they were not supposed to sleep. Alternately, they

prowled the three floors of the house until relieved by the day shift arriving at the breakfast hour. Komarov came later.

But dust and cobwebs are no respecters of high office and, every night except Sunday, when the buzzer from the rear alley sounded one of the guards would let in the cleaner.

In Moscow most cleaners are women but Komarov preferred an all-male environment around him, including the cleaner, a harmless old soldier called Leonid Zaitsev. The surname means hare or jack-rabbit in Russian, and because of his helpless manner, threadbare ex-army greatcoat, worn winter and summer, and three stainless steel teeth that gleamed at the front of his mouth – Red Army dentistry used to be pretty basic – the guards at the house just called him Rabbit. The night the president died they let him in as usual at ten p.m.

It was one in the morning when, with bucket and brush in hand, dragging the vacuum cleaner behind him, he reached the office of N.I. Akopov, Komarov's personal private secretary. The Rabbit had met the man only once, a year ago, when he had arrived to find some of the senior staff working very late. The man had been extremely rude to him, ordering him out with a stream of invective. Sometimes, since then, he had got his own back by sitting in Akopov's comfortable leather swivel chair.

Because he knew the guards were downstairs, the Rabbit sat in the swivel chair and revelled in the lush comfort of the leather. He had never had a chair like that and never would. There was a document on the desk blotter, about forty pages of typescript bound at the edge with a spiral binding and covered front and back with heavy black paper.

The Rabbit wondered why it had been left out. Normally Akopov put everything away in his wall-safe. He must have, for the Rabbit had never seen a document before and all the desk drawers were always locked. He

flicked open the black cover and looked at the title. Then he opened the file at random.

He was not a good reader, but he could do it. His foster-mother had taught him long ago, and then the teachers at the State school and finally a kindly officer in the army.

What he saw troubled him. He read one passage several times; some of the words were too long and complex, but he understood the meanings. His arthritic hands trembled as he turned the pages. Why should Komarov say such things? And about people like his foster-mother whom he had loved? He did not fully understand, but it worried him. Perhaps he should consult the guards downstairs? But they would just hit him about the head and tell him to get on with his work.

An hour went by. The guards should have patrolled but they were glued to their television where the extended news programme had informed the nation that the Prime Minister, in accordance with Article 59 of the Russian constitution, had taken over the duties of President, per interim, for the prescribed three months.

The Rabbit read the same few passages over and over until he understood their meaning. But he could not grasp the meaning behind the meaning. Komarov was a great man. He was going to become the next President of Russia, was he not? So why should he be saying such things about the Rabbit's foster-mother and people like her, for she was long dead?

At two in the morning the Rabbit stuffed the file inside his shirt, finished his work, and asked to be let out. The guards reluctantly left their TV screen to open the doors and the Rabbit wandered off into the night. He was a bit earlier than usual, but the guards did not mind.

Zaitsev thought of going home, but decided he had better not. It was too early. The buses, trains and subways were all shut down as usual. He always had to walk home, sometimes in the rain, but he needed the job. The walk took an hour. If he went now he would wake his

daughter and her child. She would not like that. So he wandered through the streets wondering what to do.

By half past three he found himself on the Kremlevskaya Quay, beneath the southern walls of the Kremlin. There were tramps and derelicts sleeping along the quay, but he found a bench with some space, sat down and stared out across the river.

The sea had calmed down as they approached the island, as it always did in the afternoon, as if telling the fisherman and the mariners that the contest for the day was over and the ocean would call a truce till tomorrow. To right and left the skipper could see several other boats heading for the Wheeland Cut, the north-western gap in the reef that gave access from the open sea to the flat lagoon.

To starboard Arthur Dean in his open *Silver Deep* raced past, making eight knots better than the *Foxy Lady*. The islander waved a greeting and the American skipper waved back. He saw two divers in the back of the *Silver Deep* and reckoned they had all been exploring the coral off North-West Point. There would be lobster in the Dean household tonight.

He slowed the *Foxy Lady* to navigate the cut, for on either side the razor-tipped coral was barely inches below the surface, and once through they settled down for the easy ten minutes down the coast to Turtle Cove.

The skipper loved his boat, his livelihood and mistress all in one. She was a ten-year-old thirty-one-foot Bertram Moppie — originally so named after designer Dick Bertram's wife — and though not the biggest or the most luxurious charter fishing vessel in Turtle Cove, her owner and skipper would match her against any sea and any fish. He had bought her five years earlier when he moved to the islands, secondhand from a yard in South Florida via a small ad in the *Boat Trader*, then worked on her himself night and day until she was the sassiest girl in all the islands. He had not regretted a dollar of her, even though he was still paying off the finance company.

Inside the harbour he eased the Bertram into her slot two down from fellow American Bob Collins on the *Sakitumi*, switched off, and came down to ask his clients if they had had a good day. They had indeed, they assured him, and paid his fee with a generous gratuity for himself and Julius. When they had gone he winked at Julius, let him keep the entire tip and the fish, took off his cap and ran his fingers through his tousled blond hair.

Then he left the grinning islander to finish cleaning off the boat, fresh water rinsing all the rods and reels and leaving *Foxy Lady* shipshape for the night. He would come back to close her up before going home. In the meantime he felt a straight lime daiquiri coming on, so he strolled down the boardwalk to the Banana Boat, greeting everyone he met as they greeted him.

CHAPTER TWO

Two hours after sitting on his riverside bench, Leonid Zaitsev had still not worked out his problem. He wished now he had not taken the document. He did not really know why he had. If they found out, he would be punished. But then, life always seemed to have punished him and he could not really understand why.

The Rabbit had been born in a small and poor village west of Smolensk in 1936. It was not much of a place, but one like tens of thousands scattered across the land: a single street, dusty in summer, a river of mud in autumn and rock-hard with frost in winter. Unpaved, of course. Thirty or so houses, some barns and the former peasants herded into a Stalinist collective farm. His father was a farmworker and they lived in a hovel just off the main track.

Down the road, with a small shop and a flat above it, lived the village baker. His father told him he should not have anything to do with the baker, because he was a *yevrey*. He did not know what that meant, but clearly it was not a good thing to be. But he noticed his mother bought her bread there, and very good bread it was.

He was puzzled that he should not talk to the baker, for he was a jolly man who would sometimes stand in the doorway of his shop, wink at Leonid and toss him a *bulochka*, a warm sticky bun fresh from the oven. Because of what his father said, he would run behind the cattleshed to eat the bun. The baker lived with his wife and two daughters, whom he could sometimes see peeping out from the shop, though they never seemed to come out and play.

On a day in late July 1941 death came to the village. The little boy did not know it was death at the time. He heard the rumbling and growling and ran out of the barn. There were huge iron monsters coming from the main

road up to the village. The first one came to a halt right in the middle of the houses. Leonid stood in the street to have a better look.

It seemed enormous, as big as a house itself, but it rolled on tracks and had a long gun sticking out in front. At the very top, above the gun, a man was standing with his upper half in the open. He took off a thick padded helmet and laid it beside him. It was very hot that day. Then he turned and looked down at Leonid.

The child saw that the man had almost white-blond hair and eyes of a blue so pale that it was as if the summer sky was shining straight through the skull from the back. There was no expression in the eyes, neither love nor hatred, just a sort of blank boredom. Quite slowly the man reached to his side and pulled a handgun from a pouch.

Something told Leonid all was not well. He heard the whump of grenades thrown through windows, and screams. He was frightened, turned and ran. There was a crack and something fanned through his hair. He got behind the cattleshed, began to cry and kept running. There was a steady chattering sound behind him and the smell of burning timber as the houses flamed. He saw the forest ahead of him and kept running.

Inside the forest he did not know what to do. He was still crying and calling for his mummy and his daddy. But they never came. They never came again.

He saw a woman screaming about her husband and her daughters and recognized the baker's wife, Mrs Davidova. She seized him and hugged him to her bosom, and he could not understand why she should do that, and what would his father think, because she was a *yevreyka*.

The village had ceased to exist and the SS-Panzer unit had turned and gone. There were a few other survivors in the forest. Later they met some partisans, hard, bearded men with guns who lived there. With a partisan guide a column of them set off, eastwards, always eastwards.

When he became tired, Mrs Davidova carried him

until at last, weeks later, they reached Moscow. She seemed to know some people there, who gave them shelter, food and warmth. They were nice to him and looked like Mr Davidova with ringlets from their temples to their chins, and broad-brimmed hats. Although he was not a yevrey, Mrs Davidova insisted she adopt him and she looked after him for years.

After the war the authorities discovered he was not her real son, and separated them, sending him to an orphanage. He cried very much when they parted, and so did she, but he never saw her again. At the orphanage they taught him that *yevrey* meant 'Jew'.

The Rabbit sat on his bench and wondered about the document under his shirt. He did not fully comprehend the meaning of phrases like 'total extermination' or 'utter annihilation'. The words were too long for him, but he did not think they were good words. He could not understand why Komarov should want to do that to people like Mrs Davidova.

There was a hint of pink in the east. In a big mansion across the river, on Sofiskaya Quay, a Royal Marine took a flag and began to climb the stairs towards the roof.

The skipper took his daiquiri, rose from the table and wandered to the timber rail. He looked down at the water, then up across the darkening harbour.

'Forty-nine,' he thought. 'Forty-nine and still in hock to the company store. Jason Monk, you're getting old and past it.'

He took a swig and felt the lime and rum hit the spot. 'What the hell, it's been a pretty good life. Eventful, anyway.'

It had not started that way. It started in a pretty humble timber-frame house in the tiny town of Crozet, south-central Virginia, just east of the Shenandoah, five miles off the highway from Waynesboro to Charlottesville.

Albemarle County is farming country, steeped in

memorials of the Civil War, for 80 per cent of that war was fought in Virginia, and no Virginian ever forgets it. At the local county grade school most of his schoolmates had fathers who raised tobacco, soybeans or hogs, or all three.

Jason Monk's father, by contrast, was a forest warden working in the Shenandoah National Park. No-one ever became a millionaire working for the Forestry Service, but it was a good life for a boy, even if dollars were short. Vacations were not for lazing around but for finding opportunities to do extra work to make some money and help out in the home.

He recalled how, when he was a child, his father would take him up into the park which covered the Blue Ridge Mountains to show him the difference between spruce, birch, fir, oak and loblolly pine. Sometimes they would meet the game-rangers and he would listen round-eyed to their tales of black bear and deer, and hunts for turkey, grouse and wild pheasant.

Later he learned to use a gun with unerring accuracy, to track and trail, make camp and hide all trace in the morning, and when he was big and strong enough he got vacation work in the logging camps.

He attended county grade school from age five until twelve and just after his thirteenth birthday enrolled at County High in Charlottesville, rising every morning before dawn to commute from Crozet to the city. It was at the High that something was to happen that would change his life.

Back in 1944 a certain GI sergeant had, with thousands of others, hauled himself off Omaha Beach and struck into the hinterland of Normandy. Somewhere outside Saint-Lô, separated from his unit, he had come into the sights of a German sniper. He was lucky: the bullet grazed his upper arm. The twenty-three-year-old American crawled into a nearby farmhouse where the family tended his wound and gave him shelter. When the sixteen-year-old daughter of the house put the cold compress on his wound and he looked

into her eyes, he knew he had been struck harder than any German bullet would ever do.

A year later he returned from Berlin to Normandy, proposed, and married her, in the orchard of her father's farm with a US Army chaplain officiating. Later, because the French do not marry in orchards, the local Catholic priest did the same in the village church. Then he brought his bride back to Virginia.

Twenty years later he was deputy principal of Charlottesville County High, and his wife, with their children off their hands, suggested she might join the faculty as a teacher of French. While French was already on the curriculum, Mrs Brady was not only a native of that country, but was also pretty and glamorous. Her classes quickly became very sought after.

In the autumn of 1965 there was a newcomer, a rather shy youth with an untidy shock of blond hair and a fetching grin, called Jason Monk. Within a year she could avow she had never heard a foreigner speak French like it. The talent had to be natural: it could not be inherited. But it was there, not just a mastery of the grammar and the syntax, but an ability to copy to perfection.

In his last year at the High, he would visit her house and they would read Malraux, Proust, Gide and Sartre (who was incredibly erotic for those days), but their mutual favourites were the older romantic poets: Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Verlaine and de Vigny. It was not intended to happen but it did. Perhaps the poets were to blame, but despite the age gap, which worried neither of them, they had a brief affair.

By the time he was eighteen Jason Monk could do two things unusual in teenagers of South Virginia: he could speak French and make love, each with considerable skill. At eighteen he joined the army.

In 1968 the Vietnam War was in full flow. Many young Americans were trying to avoid serving there. Those who presented themselves as volunteers, signing on for three years, were welcomed with open arms.

Monk did his basic training and somewhere along the line he filled in his resumé. Under the rather optimistic question 'foreign languages' he filled in 'French'. He was summoned to the office of the camp adjutant.

'You really speak French?' asked the officer. Monk explained. The adjutant called Charlottesville High and spoke with the school secretary. She contacted Mrs Brady. Then she rang back. This took a day. Monk was told to report again. This time there was a major from G2, Army Intelligence, present.

Apart from speaking Vietnamese, most people of a certain age in this former French colony spoke French. Monk was flown to Saigon. He did two tours, with a gap in between back in the States.

On the day of his release, the CO ordered him to report to his office. There were two civilians present. The colonel left.

'Please, sergeant, take a seat,' said the older and more genial of the two men. He toyed with a briar pipe while the more earnest one broke into a torrent of French. Monk replied in like vein. This went on for ten minutes. Then the French-speaker gave a grin and turned to his colleague.

'He's good, Carey, he's damn good.' Then he, too, left.

'So, what do you think of Vietnam?' asked the remaining man. He was about forty, with a lined, amused face. It was 1971.

'It's a house of cards, sir,' said Monk. 'And it's falling down. Two more years and we'll have to get out of there.'

Carey seemed to agree. He nodded several times.

'You're right, but don't tell the army. What are you going to do now?'

'I haven't made up my mind, sir.'

'Well, I can't make it up for you. But you have a gift. I don't even have it myself: My friend out there is as American as you and me, but he was raised in France for twenty years. If he says you're good,

that's enough for me. So why not continue?

'You mean college, sir?'

'I do. The GI Bill will pick up most of the tab. Uncle Sam feels you've earned it. Take advantage.'

During his years in the army Monk had sent most of his spare cash home to his Mom to help raise the other children.

'Even the GI Bill requires a thousand dollars in cash,' he said.

Carey shrugged. 'I guess a thousand dollars can be raised. If you'll major in Russian.'

'And if I do?'

'Then give me a call. The outfit I work for might be able to offer you something.'

'It could take four years, sir.'

'Oh, we're patient folk where I work.'

'How did you know about me, sir?'

'Down in Vietnam some of our people in the Phoenix Program spotted you and your work. You got some good tips on the VC. They liked that.'

'It's Langley, isn't it, sir? You're the CIA.'

'Oh, not all of it. Just a small cog.'

Carey Jordan was actually much more than a small cog. He would go on to become Deputy Director (Operations), that is, head of the whole espionage arm.

Monk took the advice and enrolled at the University of Virginia, right back in Charlottesville. He took tea with Mrs Brady again, but just as friends. He studied Slavonic Languages and majored in Russian at a level his senior tutor, himself a Russian, termed 'bilingual'. He graduated at the age of twenty-five in 1975 and just after his next birthday was accepted into the CIA. After the usual basic training at Fort Peary, known in the agency simply as 'the Farm', he was assigned to Langley, then New York and back to Langley.

It would be five years, and many, many courses later, that he would get his first posting abroad, and then it was to Nairobi, Kenya.

* * *

Corporal Meadows of the Royal Marines did his duty that bright morning of 16 July. He snap-locked the reinforced edge of the flag to the hoisting cord and ran the banner up the pole to the top. There it fluttered open in the dawn breeze to tell all the world who dwelt beneath it.

The British Government had bought the handsome old mansion on Sofiskaya Quay from its previous owner, a sugar magnate, just before the revolution, turned it into the embassy and stayed there through thick and thin ever since.

Josef Stalin, the last dictator actually to live in the state apartments of the Kremlin, used to rise each morning, throw back his curtains and see the British flag fluttering right across the river. It made him extremely angry. Repeated pressure was brought to persuade the British to move. They refused.

The mansion became over the years too small to house all the departments required by the mission to Moscow, so that sub-sections were scattered all over the city. But despite repeated offers to house all the sections in one compound, London politely replied that it would prefer to stay on Sofiskaya Quay. As the building was sovereign British territory, there it stayed.

Leonid Zaitsev sat across the river and watched the flag flutter open as the first rays of dawn tipped the hills to the east. The sight brought back a distant memory.

At eighteen the Rabbit had been called up for the Red Army and after the usual minimal basic training he had been posted with the tanks to East Germany. He was a private, tagged by his instructors as not even corporal material.

One day in 1955, on a route march outside Potsdam, he had become separated from his company in dense forest. Lost and afraid, he blundered through the woods until he stumbled out on a sandy track. There he halted, rooted to the spot, paralysed with fear. Ten yards away was an open jeep containing four soldiers. They had evidently paused for a break while on patrol.

Two were still in the vehicle, two were standing beside it, smoking cigarettes. They had bottles of beer in their hands. He knew at once they were not Russians. They were foreigners, Westerners; from the Allied Mission at Potsdam; set up under the Four-Power Agreement of 1945, of which he knew nothing. He knew only, because he had been told, that they were the enemy. come to destroy socialism and, if they could, to kill him.

They stopped talking when they saw him and stared at him. One of them said, 'Ello, 'ello. What have we got 'ere? A bleeding Russky. 'Allo, Ivan.'

He did not understand a word. He had a tommy-gun slung over his shoulder but they did not seem afraid of him. It was the other way around. Two of them wore black berets, with shining brass cap badges and behind the emblems a cluster of white and red feathers. He did not know it, but he was looking at the regimental hackle of the Royal Fusiliers.

One of the soldiers outside the vehicle peeled himself away from the bodywork and sauntered towards him. He thought he was going to wet himself. The man was also young, with red hair and a freckled face. He grinned at Zaitsev and held out a bottle.

'Come on, mate. 'Ave a beer.'

Leonid felt the chill of the cold glass in his hand. The foreign soldier nodded encouragingly. It would be poisoned, of course. He put the neck of the bottle to his lips and tilted. The cold liquid hit the back of his throat. It was strong, better than Russian beer, and good, but it made him cough. Carrot-hair laughed.

'Go on, then. 'Ave a beer,' he said. To Zaitsev it was just a voice making sounds. To his amazement the foreign soldier turned his back and sauntered the few feet to his vehicle. The man was not even afraid of him. He was armed, he was the Red Army, and the foreigners were grinning and joking.

He stood by the trees, drinking the cold beer and wondered what Colonel Nikolayev would think. The colonel commanded his squadron. He was only about

thirty, but he was a decorated war hero. Once he had stopped and asked Zaitsev about his background, where he came from. The private had told him: an orphanage. The colonel had patted him on the back and told him that now he had a home. He adored Colonel Nikolayev.

He was too frightened to throw their beer back at them, and anyway it tasted very good, even if it was poisoned. So he drank it. After ten minutes the two soldiers on the ground climbed into the rear of the jeep and pulled on their berets. The driver started up and they drove away in a hurry, no fear of him. The one with the red hair turned and waved. They were the enemy, they were preparing to invade Russia, but they waved at him.

When they had gone he threw the empty bottle as far into the woods as he could and ran through the trees until eventually he saw a Russian lorry which brought him back to camp. The sergeant gave him a week's fatigues for getting lost, but he never told anyone about the foreigners or the beer.

Before the foreign vehicle drove off he noticed that it had some sort of regimental insignia on the front right wing and a wasp aerial high above the back. On the aerial was a flag, about a foot square. It had crosses: one upright in red and two diagonal, red and white. All on a blue background. A funny flag in red, white and blue.

Forty-four years later, there it was again, fluttering above a building across the river. The Rabbit had solved his problem. He knew he should not have stolen the file from Akopov, but he could not now take it back. Perhaps no-one would notice it was missing. So he would give it to the people with the funny flag who gave you beer. They would know what to do with it.

He rose from his bench and began to walk down the river bank towards the Stone Bridge across the Moskva to the Sofiskaya Quay.

When the little boy developed a headache and a slight temperature his mother thought at first it was a summer chill. But by nightfall the five-year-old was screaming that his head hurt and he kept both parents awake all night. In the morning their neighbours in the Soviet diplomatic compound, who had also not slept too well because the walls were thin and the windows were open in the heat, asked what was wrong.

That morning the mother took her son to the doctor. None of the Soviet bloc embassies merited a doctor all to themselves, but they shared one. Dr Svoboda was at the Czech embassy but he ministered to the whole Communist community. He was a good and conscientious man and it took him only a few moments to assure the Russian mother that her boy had a touch of malaria. He administered the appropriate dose of one of the Niviquine/Paludrine variants used by Russian medicine at that time, with further tablets to be taken daily.

There was no response. In two days the condition worsened. The temperature and the shivers increased and the child screamed from his headache. The ambassador had no hesitation in granting permission for a visit to Nairobi General Hospital. Because the mother could speak no English, her husband, Second Secretary (Trade) Nikolai Ilyich Turkin, went with her.

Dr Winston Moi, too, was a fine physician and he probably knew the tropical diseases better than the Czech did. He did a thorough diagnosis and straightened up with a smile.

'Plasmodium falciparum,' he decreed. The father leaned forward with a puzzled frown. His English was good, but not that good. 'It is a variant of malaria, but alas resistant to all the chloroquine-based drugs such as those prescribed by my good colleague Dr Svoboda.'

Dr Moi administered an intravenous injection of a strong broad-spectrum antibiotic. It seemed to work. At

first. After a week, when the drug course ceased, the condition returned. By now the mother was hysterical. Denouncing all forms of foreign medicine, she insisted she and her son be flown back to Moscow, and the ambassador agreed.

Once there, the boy was admitted to one of the exclusive KGB clinics. This was possible because Second Secretary (Trade) Nikolai Turkin was in fact Major Turkin of the First Chief Directorate of the KGB.

The clinic was good, and it had a fine tropical medicine department, because KGB men can be posted all over the world. Because of the intractable nature of the small boy's case, it went right up to the department head, Professor Glazunov. He read both the files from Nairobi and ordered a series of CT and ultra-sound scans, then the last word in technology, unavailable just about anywhere else in the USSR.

The scans worried him badly. They revealed a series of developing internal abscesses on various organs inside the boy. When he asked Mrs Turkin into his office his face was grave.

'I know what it is, at least I am sure I do, but it cannot be treated. With heavy use of antibiotics, your boy may survive a month. More, unlikely. I am very sorry.'

The weeping mother was escorted out. A sympathetic assistant explained to her what had been found. It was a rare disease called melioidosis, very uncommon indeed in Africa but more common in South-East Asia. It was the Americans who had identified it, during the Vietnam War.

US helicopter pilots had first produced symptoms of a new and usually fatal illness. Research discovered that the rotor blades, hovering over the rice paddies, whipped up a fine aerosol spray of paddy-water, which some pilots had breathed in. The bacillus, resistant to all known antibiotics, was in the water. The Russians knew this because, although they shared none of their coveries at that time, they were like a sponge, came to absorbing Western knowledge.

Glazunov would automatically receive every single Western technical publication in his field.

In a long telephone call punctuated by sobbing, Mrs Turkin told her husband their son was going to die. From melioidosis. Major Turkin wrote it down. Then he went to see his superior, the KGB head of station, Colonel Kuliev. He was sympathetic but adamant.

'Intervene with the Americans? Are you crazy?'

'Comrade Colonel, if the Yanks have identified it, and seven years ago at that, they may have something for it.'

'But we can't ask them that,' protested the colonel. 'There is a question of national prestige here.'

'There is a question of my son's life here,' shouted the major.

'That is enough. Consider yourself dismissed.'

Taking his career in his hands Turkin went to the ambassador. The diplomat was not a cruel man but he, too, would not be moved.

'Interventions between our Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the State Department are rare and confined to matters of State,' he told the young officer. 'By the way, does Colonel Kuliev know you are here?'

'No, Comrade Ambassador.'

'Then, for the sake of your future prospects, I shall not tell him. And neither will you. But the answer is no.'

'If I were a member of the Politburo . . .' Turkin began.

'But you are not. You are a junior major of thirty-two serving his country in the middle of Kenya. I am sorry for your boy, but there is nothing that can be done.'

As he went down the stairs Nikolai Turkin reflected bitterly that First Secretary Yuri Andropov was daily being kept alive by medications flown in from London. Then he went out to get drunk.

Getting into the British embassy was not that easy. Standing on the pavement across the quay Zaitsev could see the big ochre-coloured mansion and even the top of

the pillared portico that shielded the giant, carved timber doors. But there was no way of just wandering in.

Along the frontage of the still-shuttered building ran a wall of steel, penetrated by two wide gates for cars, one for 'in' and one for 'out'. Also of corrugated steel, they were electrically operated and firmly closed.

To the right-hand side was an entrance for pedestrians, but there were two barred grilles. At pavement level two Russian militiamen were posted to check on anyone trying to walk in. The Rabbit had no intention of presenting himself to *them*. Even past the first grille there was a passage and a second barred gate. Between the two was the cabin of the embassy security, itself manned by two British-employed Russian guards. Their business was to ask entrants what they wanted, and then check inside the embassy. Too many seeking visas had tried to wangle their way into the building via that gate.

Zaitsev wandered aimlessly round to the back where, in a narrow street, was the entrance to the visa section. At seven in the morning, the door would not open for another three hours, but already there was a queue a hundred metres long. Clearly many had waited all night. To join the line now would mean almost two days of waiting. He ambled back to the front. This time the militiamen gave him a long and searching look. Frightened, Zaitsev shuffled off down the quay to wait until the embassy opened for business and the diplomats arrived.

Just before ten the first of the British began to appear. They came in cars. The vehicles paused at the 'in' gate but clearly each one was expected and the gate rumbled open to let the car in before sliding closed again. Zaitsev, watching down the quay, thought of trying to approach a car, but they all had the windows closed and the militiamen were only feet away. The people in the cars would think he was a petitioner of some kind and would keep their windows closed. Then he would be arrested. The police would find out what he had done and tell Akopov.

Leonid Zaitsev was not accustomed to complex problems. He was puzzled but he was also fixated. He just wanted to give his pieces of paper to the people with the funny flag. So through that long, hot morning he watched and he waited.

NAIROBI, 1983

Like all Soviet diplomats Nikolai Turkin had a limited resource of foreign exchange and that included Kenyan currency. The Ibis Grill, Alan Bobbe's Bistro and the Carnivore were a mite expensive for his pocket. He went to the open-air Thorn Tree Café at the New Stanley Hotel on Kimathi Street, took a table in the garden not far from the big old acacia tree, ordered a vodka and a beer chaser and sat sunk in despair.

Thirty minutes later a man of about his own age who had sipped half a beer at the bar eased himself off his stool and walked over. Turkin heard a voice say in English: 'Hey, lighten up, old pal, it may never happen.'

The Russian looked up. He recognized the American vaguely. Someone from their embassy. Turkin worked in Directorate K of the First Chief Directorate, the counter-intelligence wing. His job was not only to monitor all the Soviet diplomats and protect the local KGB operation from penetration; but also to keep a sharp eye open for a vulnerable Westerner who might be recruited. As such he had the freedom to mix with other diplomats, including Westerners, a freedom denied to any 'ordinary' Russian on the staff.

The CIA suspected, precisely from his freedom of movement and contact, what Turkin really did; and had a slim file on him. But there was no handle to grip. The man was a copper-bottomed child of the Soviet regime.

For his part Turkin suspected the American was probably CIA, but he had been taught that all American diplomats were probably CIA, a fond illusion but an error on the side of caution.

The American sat down and held out a hand. 'Jason

Monk. You're Nik Turkin, right? Saw you at the British garden party last week. You look like you just got a posting to Greenland.'

Turkin studied the American. He had a shock of corn-coloured hair that fell over his forehead and an engaging grin. There seemed no guile in his face; perhaps he was not CIA after all. He seemed the sort of man one could talk to. On another day Nikolai Turkin would have leaned back on all those years of training and remained polite but non-committal. This was not another day. He needed to talk to someone. He started, and poured his heart out. The American was concerned and sympathetic. He noted the word melioidosis on a beer mat. They parted long after dark. The Russian went back to the guarded compound and Monk to his apartment off Harry Thuku Road.

Celia Stone was twenty-six, slim, dark and pretty. She was also Assistant Press Attaché at the British embassy, Moscow, on her first foreign posting since being accepted into the Foreign Office two years earlier after graduating in Russian from Girton College, Cambridge. She was also enjoying life.

That 16 July she came out of the embassy's big front doors and glanced down at the car park where her small but functional Rover stood parked.

From inside the embassy compound she could see what Zaitsev could not, because of the steel wall. She stood at the top of the five steps leading down to the blacktop parking area, punctured by tinsured lawns, small trees, bushes and a blaze of flower beds. Looking over the steel wall, she could see across the river the towering bulk of the Kremlin, pastel lime, ochre, cream and white with the gleaming golden onion-domes of the various cathedrals jutting above the crenellated red stone wall that encircled the fortress. It was a magnificent sight.

Either side of her the raised entrance was reached b

two ramps, up which only the ambassador was allowed to drive. Lesser mortals parked below and walked. Once a young diplomat had done his career a power of no-good by driving his VW Beetle up the ramp in sheeting rain and parking beneath the portico. Minutes later the ambassador, arriving to find his access blocked, had to get out of his Rolls-Royce at the bottom and walk the rest. He was soaked and not amused.

Celia Stone tripped down the steps, nodded at the gateman, got into the bright red Rover and started up. By the time she had pulled over to the 'out' gate, the steel sheets were sliding back. She rolled out onto Sofiskaya Quay and turned left towards Stone Bridge, heading for her lunch date with a reporter from *Sevodnya*. She did not notice a scruffy old man shuffling frantically after her. Nor did she realize hers was the first car to leave the embassy that morning.

The Kamenniy Most or Stone Bridge is the oldest permanent bridge across the river. In olden days pontoon bridges were used; erected in spring and dismantled in winter when the ice became hard enough to ride over.

Because of its bulk, it not only spans the river but jumps over Sofiskaya Quay as well. To gain access from the Quay by road, a driver has to turn left again for a hundred yards until the bridge returns to ground level, then hang a U-turn and motor up the slope of the bridge. But a walker can run up the steps direct from the Quay below to the bridge above. That is what the Rabbit did.

He was on the pavement of the Stone Bridge when the red Rover came by. He waved his arms, the woman inside gave a startled look and drove on. Zaitsev hopelessly set off in pursuit. But he had noted the Russian numberplate, and saw that on the northern side of the bridge the car pulled half-left into the traffic maelstrom of Borovitsky Square.

Celia Stone's destination was the Rosy O'Grady Pub on Znamenka Street. This unlikely Muscovite tavern is actually Irish, and is the watering hole where the Irish

ambassador is likely to be found on New Year's Eve if he can get away from the stuffier parties of the diplomatic circuit. It also serves lunch. Celia Stone had chosen to meet her Russian reporter there.

She found a parking space without difficulty, for fewer and fewer Russians could afford cars or the petrol to run them, just round the corner, and began to walk back. As always, when an obvious foreigner approached a restaurant, the derelicts and beggars hauled themselves out of their doorways and off the pavement to intercept and ask for food.

As a young diplomat, she had been briefed at the Foreign Office in London before her posting, but the reality always shocked her. She had seen beggars in the London Underground and in the alleys of New York, the bag people who had somehow slithered down the ladder of society to take up residence on its bottom rung. But these had mainly been people who had chosen the life of the mendicant, with charitable help a few streets away.

In Moscow, the capital of a country experiencing the onset of real famine, the wretches with their hands out for money or food had once, and not long ago, been farmers, soldiers, clerks and shopkeepers. She was reminded of television documentaries of the Third World.

Vadim, the giant doorman of the Rosy O'Grady, saw her several yards away and ran forward, clouting several fellow-Russians roughly out of the way in order to secure safe passage for a vital hard-currency patron of his employer's restaurant.

Offended by the spectacle of the beggars' humiliation at the hands of another Russian, Celia protested feebly but Vadim simply swept a long, muscular arm between her and the row of extended hands, flung open the restaurant door and ushered her inside.

The contrast was immediate, from the dusty street and the hungry to the convivial interior of fifty people who could afford meat and 6



Monk had to lie and say he worked with the State Department.

Stein had taken a PhD in tropical medicine and was even then rejoicing in his new appointment in the research facility at the Walter Reed Army Hospital. From his flat in Nairobi Jason Monk checked his address book and made a call. A blurred voice answered at the tenth ring.

'Yeah?'

'Hi, Norm, It's Jason Monk.' Pause.

'Great. Where are you?'

'In Nairobi.'

'Great. Nairobi. Of course. And what time do you have?'

Monk told him. Midday.

'Well it's five in the fucking morning here and my alarm is set for seven. I was up half the night with the baby. It's teething, for God's sake. Thanks a lot, pal.'

'Calm down, Norm. Tell me something. You ever heard of something called melioidosis?'

There was a pause. The voice that came back had lost all trace of sleep.

'Why do you ask?'

Monk spun him a story. Not about a Russian diplomat. He said there was a kid of five, son of a guy he knew. Seemed the boy was for the big jump. He had heard vaguely that Uncle Sam had had some experience of that particular illness.

'Give me your number,' said Stein. 'I have to make some calls. I'll come back to you.'

It was five in the afternoon when Monk's phone rang.

'There is, maybe something,' said the epidemiologist. 'Now listen, it's completely revolutionary, prototype stage. We've done some tests, they seem good. So far. But it hasn't even been submitted to the FDA yet. Let alone cleared. We're not through testing yet.'

In the USA the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has to clear every new medication before

release to the public. What Dr Stein was describing was a very early cephalosporin antibiotic with no name in 1983. It would later be marketed in the late eighties as Cefotaxime. Then it was just called CZ-1. Today it is the standard treatment for melioidosis.

'It may have side-effects,' said Stein. 'We don't know.'

'How long to develop, these side-effects?' asked Monk.

'No idea.'

'Well, if the kid's going to be dead in three weeks, what's to lose?' Stein sighed heavily. 'I don't know. It's against all the regs.'

'I swear, no-one will ever know. C'mon Norm; for all those chicks I used to pull for you.'

He heard the roar of laughter coming all the way from Chevy Chase, Maryland.

'You ever tell Becky and I'll kill you,' said Dr Stein and the line went dead.

Forty-eight hours later a package arrived for Monk at the embassy. It came via an international freight express company. It contained a vacuum flask with dry ice. A short, unsigned note said the ice contained two phials. Monk made a call to the Soviet embassy and left a message with the trade section for Second Secretary Turkin. 'Don't forget our beer at six tonight,' he said. The message was reported to Colonel Kuliev.

'Who is this Monk?' he asked Turkin.

'He's an American diplomat. He seems disillusioned with US foreign policy in Africa. I am trying to develop him as a source.'

Kuliev nodded heavily. That was good work, the sort of thing that went well on the report to Yazenevo.

At the Thorn Tree Café Monk handed over his package. Turkin looked apprehensive in case anyone from his own side had seen them. The package could contain money.

'What is it?' he asked.

Monk told him. 'It might not work, but it can do no harm. It's all we have.'

The Russian went stiff, his eyes cold.

'And what do you want for this . . . gift?' It was obvious there would be a payback.

'You were on the level about your kid? Or just acting?'

'No acting. Not this time. Always we act, people like you and me. But not this time.'

In fact Monk had already checked with the Nairobi General Hospital. Dr Winston Moi had confirmed the basic facts. Tough, but this is a tough world, he thought. He rose from the table. According to the rules he should twist this man into passing something over, something secret. But he knew the story of the small son was not a 'con', not this time. If he had to behave that way he might as well be a street sweeper in the Bronx.

'Take it, pal. Hope it works. No charge.'

He walked away. Halfway to the door a voice called him.

'Mr Monk, you understand Russian?'

Monk nodded. 'A bit.'

'I thought you would. Then you will understand the word *spasibo*.'

She came out of Rosy O'Grady's just after two and approached the driver's side of her car. The Rover has central locking. As she unlocked the driver's door, the passenger door also unlocked. She was in her seat belt, engine started and ready to go when the passenger door opened. She looked up, startled. He was standing there, stooping to the open door. Threadbare old army coat, four soiled medals clinging to the lapel, stubbled chin. When he opened his mouth three steel teeth glinted at the front. He tossed a file into her lap. She easily understood enough Russian to repeat later what he said.

'Please, give to Mr Ambassador. For the beer.'

The sight of him frightened her. He was clearly mad,

perhaps schizophrenic. People like that can be dangerous. White-faced, Celia Stone pulled out into the street, the open door flailing until it was closed by the car's momentum. She tossed the ridiculous petition, or whatever it was, onto the floor of the front passenger area and drove back to the embassy.

CHAPTER THREE

It was just before noon on the same day, 16 July, that Igor Komarov, sitting in his office on the first floor of the house off Kiselny Boulevard, contacted his chief personal assistant by intercom.

'The document I lent you yesterday, you have had a chance to read it?' he asked.

'I have indeed, Mr President. Quite brilliant, if I may say so,' Akopov replied. All Komarov's staff referred to him as 'Mr President', meaning president of the executive committee of the Union of Patriotic Forces. They were in any case convinced that within twelve months he would still be Mr President but for a different reason.

'Thank you,' said Komarov, 'then please return it to me.'

The intercom went dead. Akopov rose and went to his wall-safe. He knew the combination by heart and spun the central dial the required six times. When the door swung open he looked inside for the black cartridge-paper-bound file. It was not there.

Puzzled, he emptied the safe paper by paper and file by file. A cold fear, part panic and part disbelief, gripped him. Taking a hold on himself, he began again. The files on the carpet around his knees were sorted out and examined, sheet by sheet and one by one. No black file. A light sweat beaded his forehead. He had worked contentedly in the office all morning, convinced that, before leaving the previous evening, he had put every confidential document safely away. He always did; he was a creature of habit.

After the safe, he began on the drawers of his desk. Nothing. He searched the floor under the desk, then every cupboard and closet. Just before one o'clock he knocked on Igor Komarov's door, was admitted, and confessed he could not find it.

The presidential candidate stared at him for several seconds.

The man who most of the world presumed would be the next President of Russia was a highly complex personality who, behind his public persona, preferred to keep much of himself intensely private. He could not have been a greater contrast to his predecessor, the ousted Zhirinovsky, whom he now openly referred to as a buffoon.

Komarov was of medium height and build with neatly trimmed iron-grey hair and clean-shaven. Among his two most evident traits were an absorption with personal cleanliness and a deep dislike of physical contact. Unlike most Russian politicians, with their back-slapping, vodka-toasting, arms-around-shoulders bonhomie, Komarov insisted on formal dress and manner of speech in his personal entourage. He rarely if ever donned the uniform of the Black Guards and was usually dressed in a double-breasted grey suit with collar and tie.

After years of politics none but a very few could claim to be on close personal terms with him, and no-one dared pretend to be an intimate. Nikita Ivanovich Akopov had been his confidential private secretary for a decade but the relationship was still one of master and slavishly devoted servant.

Unlike Yeltsin, who had raised staff members to the rank of drinking and tennis-playing buddies, Komarov would, so far as was known, only permit one man and that was his Head of Security Colonel Anatoli Grishin, to refer to him by his first name.

But like all successful politicians, Komarov could play the chameleon when he had to. To the media, on the rare occasions when he deigned to meet them personally, he could become the grave statesman. Before his own rallies, he became transformed in a manner that never ceased to evoke Akopov's utter admiration. On the podium appeared the orator, a man of all the people enunciating their hopes, fears and desires, their rage and their bigotry, with unerring accuracy. To them and only

them would he play the figure of geniality and common touch.

Beneath both personae there was a third, the one that frightened Akopov. Even the rumour of the existence of the third man beneath the veneer was enough to keep those around him, staff, colleagues and guards, in a permanent state of the deference he demanded.

Only twice in ten years had Nikita Akopov seen the demonic rage inside the man well up and run out of control. On another dozen occasions he had seen the struggle to control that rage, and witnessed it successfully controlled. On the two occasions when the control had failed, Akopov had seen the man who dominated, fascinated and controlled him, the man he followed and worshipped, turn into a screaming, raging demon.

He had hurled telephones, vases and ink-stands at the trembling servant who had offended him, reducing one senior Black Guards officer to a blubbing wreck. He had used language more foul than Akopov had ever heard, broken furniture and once had to be restrained as he belaboured a victim with a heavy ebony ruler lest he actually kill the man.

Akopov knew the sign when one of these rages in the president of the UPF was coming to the surface. Komarov's face went deathly pale, his manner became even more formal and courteous, but two bright red spots burned high on each cheekbone.

'Are you saying you have lost it, Nikita Ivanovich?'

'Not lost, Mr President. Apparently mislaid.'

'That document is of a more confidential nature than anything you have ever handled. You have read it. You can understand why.'

'I do indeed, Mr President.'

'There are only three copies in existence, Nikita. Two are in my own safe. No more than a tiny group of those closest to me will ever be allowed to see it. I even wrote it and typed it myself. I, Igor Komarov, actually typed all the pages myself rather than entrust it to a secretary. It is that confidential.'

'Very wise, Mr President.'

'And because I count . . . counted you as one of that tiny group, I permitted you to see it. Now you tell me it is lost.'

'Mislaid, temporarily mislaid, I assure you, Mr President.'

Komarov was staring at him with those mesmeric eyes that could charm sceptics into collaboration or terrify backsliders. On each cheekbone the red spot burned bright in the pale face.

'When did you last see it?'

'Last night, Mr President. I stayed late in order to read it in privacy. I left at eight o'clock.'

Komarov nodded. The night-duty guards' register would confirm or deny that.

'You took it with you. Despite my orders, you permitted the file to leave the building.'

'No, Mr President, I swear it. I locked it in the safe. I would never leave a confidential document lying around, or take it with me.'

'It is not in the safe now?'

Akopov swallowed, but he had no saliva.

'How many times had you been to the safe before my call?'

'None, Mr President. When you called, that was the first time I went to the safe.'

'It was locked?'

'Yes, as usual.'

'It had been broken into?'

'Apparently not, Mr President.'

'You have searched the room?'

'From top to bottom and end to end. I cannot understand it.'

Komarov thought for several minutes. Behind his blank face he felt a rising panic. Finally he called the security office on the ground floor.

'Seal the building. No-one enters, no-one leaves. Contact Colonel Grishin. Tell him to report to my office. Immediately. Wherever he is, whatever he is

doing, I want him here within the hour.'

He lifted his forefinger from the intercom and gazed at his white-faced and trembling PA.

'Return to your office. Communicate with nobody. Wait there until further notice.'

As an intelligent, single and thoroughly modern young woman, Celia Stone had long decided that she had the right to take her pleasures whenever and with whomsoever she fancied. At the moment she fancied the hard young muscles of Hugo Gray, who had arrived from London barely two months earlier and six months after herself. He was Assistant Cultural Attaché and on the same grade as herself but two years older and also single.

Each had a small but functional apartment in a residential block assigned to British embassy staff off Kutuzovsky Prospekt, a hollow-square building round a courtyard useful for parking, and with Russian militiamen posted at the entrance barrier. Even in modern Russia everyone presumed that goings in and out were noted, but at least the cars remained unvandalized.

After lunch she drove back inside the protective screen of the embassy on Sofiskaya Quay and wrote up her report of lunch with the journalist. Much of their talk had been about the death of President Cherkassov the previous day and what was likely to happen now. She had assured the journalist of the continuing deep interest of the British people in Russian events, and hoped he believed her. She would know when his article appeared.

At five she drove back to her apartment for a bath and a short rest. She had a dinner date with Hugo Gray at eight, after which she intended they both return to her own flat, and she did not wish to do much sleeping during the night.

By four in the afternoon Colonel Anatoli Grishin convinced himself the missing document was not in the building. He sat in Igor Komarov's office and told him so.

'So, it is Akopov?'

'First suspect, certainly. His private apartment has been ransacked. In his presence. Nothing. I thought he might have taken it with him then lost his attaché case. That happened once at the Ministry of Defence. I was in charge of investigation. It turned out not to be espionage but criminal negligence. The person responsible went to the camps. But Akopov's briefcase is the one he always uses. It has been identified by three people.'

'So, he did it deliberately?'

'Possibly. But I have a problem with that. Why did he come in this morning and wait around to be caught? He had twelve hours to disappear. I may wish to . . . um . . . interrogate him more lengthily. To establish elimination or confession.'

'Permission granted.'

'And after that?'

Igor Komarov turned in his swivel chair to face the window. He mused for a while.

'Akopov has been a very good personal secretary,' he said at length. 'But, after this, a replacement will be required. My problem is, he has seen the document. Its contents are extremely confidential. If he is retained in a diminished capacity, or dismissed, he might feel a sense of resentment, even be tempted to divulge what he knows. That would be a pity, a great pity.'

'I understand completely,' said Colonel Grishin.

At that point the two bewildered night-guards arrived and Grishin went downstairs to question them.

By nine p.m. the night-guards' quarters at the Black Guards barracks outside the city had been searched, revealing nothing more than the expected toiletries and porn magazines.

Inside the house the two men were separated and interviewed in different rooms. Grishin questioned them personally. They were clearly terrified of him, as well they might be. His reputation preceded him.

Occasionally he shouted obscenities in their ears, but

for the two sweating men the worst ordeal was when he sat close and whispered the details of what awaited those caught lying to him. By eight he had a complete picture of what had happened during their shift the previous night. He knew their patrols had been erratic and irregular, that they had been glued to the television screen for details of the president's death. And he learned for the first time of the existence of the cleaner.

The man had been let in at ten. As usual. Via the underground passage. No-one had accompanied him. Both guards had been needed to open the three doors, because one had the keypad combination to the street-door, the other to the innermost door and both to the middle door.

He knew the guards had seen the old man started on the top floor. As usual. He knew the guards had then broken from their television-watching to open the offices of the middle floor, the vital executive suite. He knew that one had stood in the doorway while the cleaning of Komarov's personal office had been accomplished and the door then relocked, but that both men had been downstairs when the cleaner completed the remainder of the middle floor. As usual. So . . . the cleaner had been alone in Akopov's office. And he had left earlier than usual, in the small hours.

At nine Akopov, extremely pale, was escorted from the building. His own car was used but one of the Black Guards drove. Another sat beside the disgraced secretary in the rear. The car did not drive to Akopov's apartment. It headed out of the city to one of the sprawling camps housing the Young Combatants.

By nine Colonel Grishin had finished reading the file from the staff and personnel office containing the employment details of one Zaitsev, Leonid, aged sixty-three, office cleaner. There was a private address, but the man would have left. He was due at the house at ten.

He did not appear. At midnight Colonel Grishin and three Black Guards left to visit the old man's residence.

city in the US embassy the CIA was down to a football team.

But Hugo Gray was young and keen, and convinced most diplomatic apartments were still bugged. Communism might have gone, but Russian paranoia was doing fine. He was correct but the FSB agents had already tagged him for what he was and were quite happy.

The weirdly named Enthusiasts' Boulevard is probably the most decrepit, shabbiest and meanest quarter in the city of Moscow. In a triumph of Communist planning it was situated downwind of the chemical warfare research establishment, which had filters like tennis nets. The only enthusiasm ever noted among its inhabitants was possessed by those slated to move out.

According to the records, Leonid Zaitsev lived with his daughter, her truck-driver husband and their child in an apartment just off the main street. It was half past twelve and still a warm summer's night when the sleek black Chaika, its driver's head stuck out of the window to read the grimy street names, pulled up outside.

The son-in-law's name was different, of course, and they had to check with a roused and drowsy neighbour on the ground floor to establish that the family lived on the fourth. There was no elevator. The four men clumped up the stairs and hammered on the peeling door.

The woman who answered, sleepy and bleary-eyed, must have been in her mid-thirties but looked a decade older. Grishin was polite but insistent. His men pushed past and fanned out to search the flat. There was not much to search; it was tiny. Two rooms, in fact, with a foetid lavatory and curtained cooking alcove.

The woman had been sleeping with her six-year-old in the one family-sized bed in one of the rooms. The child now woke and began to grizzle, the whine rising to

man could explain. And explain he would.

Before the normal hour of breakfast he had put 2,000 of his own men, all in civilian clothes, onto the streets of Moscow to search for an old man in a threadbare ex-army greatcoat. He had no photograph, but the description was precise, even down to the three steel teeth at the front of the mouth.

However, the job was not that easy, even with 2,000 searchers. There were ten times that number of derelicts crowding the back alleys and parks, of all ages and sizes, and all shabbily dressed. If, as he suspected, Zaitsev was now living rough, everyone would have to be examined. One of them would have three steel teeth and a black-covered file. Grishin wanted both and without delay. His bewildered but obedient Black Guards, in non-uniform trousers and shirts, for the day was hot, fanned out through Moscow.

LANGLEY, DECEMBER 1983

Jason Monk rose from his desk, stretched and decided to go down to the commissary. A month back from Nairobi, he had been told his performance reports were good and in some cases extremely so. Promotion was in the pipeline, and the head of Africa Division was pleased but would be sorry to lose him.

Monk had arrived back to find himself assigned to the Spanish language course on which he would begin just after the Christmas and New Year break. Spanish would constitute his third foreign language, but more, it would open up the whole Latin America Division to him.

South America was a big territory and an important one, for not only was it within the American 'backyard' as prescribed by the Monroe Doctrine, it was also a prime target for the Soviet bloc which had targeted it for insurrection, subversion and Communist revolution. As a result, the KGB had a big operation south of the Rio Grande, one the CIA was determined to head off. So for

solenoids are a law to themselves. After frantically trying to get a reaction, Gray ran after the red Rover as it neared the barrier of the enclave and tapped on the window. Celia Stone gave him a lift.

Normally embassy staff would not be working on a Saturday, and least of all a hot summer Saturday when they would have spent a sylvan weekend, but the President's death had produced a sudden welter of extra work and weekend working was required.

He sat beside her as she swerved out into Kutuzovsky Prospekt and headed past the Ukraina Hotel towards the Kremlin. His heels scuffed something on the floor. He stooped and retrieved it.

'Your takeover bid for *Izvestia*?' he asked. She looked sideways and recognized the file he was holding.

'Oh, God, I was going to bin it yesterday. Some old lunatic threw it into the car. Nearly frightened the life out of me.'

'Another petition,' said Gray. 'They never stop. Usually it's for visas, of course.' He flicked open the black cover and glanced at the title page. 'No, it's more political.'

'Great. I'm Mr Bonkers and here is my master-plan to save the world. Just give it to the ambassador.'

'Is that what he said? Give it to the ambassador?'

'Yep. That, and thanks for the beer.'

'What beer?'

'How should I know? He was a nutcase.'

Gray read the title page and turned over several more. He grew quiet.

'It is political,' he said, 'it's some kind of manifesto.'

'You want it, you have it,' said Celia. They left the Alexandrovsky Gardens behind and turned towards the Stone Bridge.

Hugo Gray was going to give the unwanted gift a quick skim and then ease it into the wastepaper basket. But back in his office, he read ten pages, rose and sought interview with the head of station, a shrewd Scot with mordant wit.

The head's office was swept daily for bugs, but really secret conferences were always held in the 'bubble'. This strange confection is usually a conference chamber suspended from reinforced beams so that it is surrounded on all sides by an air-filled gap when the doors are closed. Regularly 'swept' inside and out, the bubble is deemed unbuggable by hostile Intelligence. Gray did not feel confident enough to ask that they adjourn to the bubble.

'Yes, laddie,' said the head.

'Look, Jock, I don't know whether I'm wasting your time. Probably am. Sorry. But something odd happened yesterday. An old man threw this into the car of Celia Stone. You know? That Press Attaché girl. It may be nothing . . .'

He petered out. The head regarded him over the top of his half-moons.

'Threw it into her car?' he asked gently.

'She says. Just tore the door open, threw it into the car, asked her to give it to the ambassador, and was gone.'

The head of station put out his hand for the black-covered file with Gray's two footprints on it.

'What kind of man?' he asked.

'Old, shabby, stubbled. Like a tramp. Frightened the hell out of her.'

'A petition, perhaps?'

'That's what she thought. She was going to throw it away. But she gave me a lift in this morning. I read some of it on the way. It seems more political. The inside title page has the stamp of the logo of the UPF. It reads as if written by Igor Komarov.'

'Our president-to-be. Odd. All right, laddie, leave it with me.'

'Thanks, Jock,' said Gray and rose. The intimacy of first names even between juniors and senior mandarins is encouraged inside the British Secret Intelligence Service. It is deemed to encourage a sense of camaraderie, of family, underlining the us-and-them psychology common to all services in this strange trade.

Only the chief himself is referred to as 'chief' or 'sir'.

Gray had reached the door when his boss caused him to pause, his hand on the doorknob.

'One thing, laddie. Apartments in the Soviet era were shoddily built and walls are thin. They remain thin. Our Third Trade Secretary this morning is red-eyed with lack of sleep. Fortunately his lady wife is in England. Next time, could you and the delightful Miss Stone be just a wee bit quieter?'

Hugo Gray went as red as the Kremlin walls and left. The head of station put the black document to one side. He faced a busy day, and the ambassador wanted to see him at eleven. His Excellency was a busy man and would not wish to be troubled with objects thrown into staff cars by tramps. It would not be until that night, working late in his office, that the spymaster would read what would later come to be known as the Black Manifesto.

MADRID, AUGUST 1984

Before it moved to a new address in November 1986, the Indian embassy in Madrid was situated in an ornate turn-of-the-century building at 93 Calle Velasquez. On Independence Day 1984 the Indian ambassador held, as customary, a large reception for leading members of the Spanish Government and for the diplomatic corps. As always, it was on 15 August.

Owing to the extreme heat of Madrid in that month and the fact that August is usually chosen for governmental, parliamentary and diplomatic vacations, many senior figures were away from the capital and were represented by more junior officers.

From the ambassador's point of view it was regrettable, but the Indians can hardly rewrite history and change their Independence Day.

The Americans were represented by their chargé d'affaires, supported by the Second Trade Secretary, one Jason Monk. The chief of the CIA station within the embassy was also away and Monk, elevated to the

seconds, and making polite but desultory conversation that they did not mean. Monk, having estimated he had done his bit for Uncle Sam, was about to leave when he spotted a face he knew.

Sliding through the throng he came up behind the man and waited until the dark grey suit had finished talking to a lady in a sari and was alone for a second. From behind, he said in Russian, 'So, my friend, what happened with your son?'

The man stiffened and turned. Then he gave a smile.

'Thank you,' said Nikolai Turkin, 'he recovered. He is fit and well.'

'I am glad,' said Monk, 'and by the look of it your career survived as well.'

Turkin nodded. Taking a gift from the enemy was a serious offence and had he been reported he would never have left the USSR again. But he had been forced to throw himself on the mercy of Professor Glazunov. The old physician had a son of his own and privately believed his country should co-operate with the best research establishments in the world on matters medical. He decided not to report the young officer and modestly accepted his colleagues' plaudits for the remarkable recovery.

'Thankfully, yes, but it was close,' he replied.

'Let's have dinner,' said Monk. The Soviet looked startled. Monk held up his hands in mock surrender. 'No pitch, I promise.'

Turkin relaxed. Both men knew what the other did. The fact that Monk spoke such perfect Russian indicated he could not possibly be in the trade section at the US embassy. Monk knew that Turkin had got to be KGB, probably in Line KR, the counter-intelligence branch, because of his liberty to be seen talking to Americans.

The word 'pitch' gave the game away, and the fact that the Americans could use the word in a joking fashion indicated he was suggesting a brief truce in the Cold War. A 'pitch' or 'cold pitch' is a term used when one

'Why not? Look, my friend, the system you work for is going to change. Soon now. We could help it change faster. Yuri will grow-up to live as a free man.'

Andropov had died, despite the medications from London. He had been succeeded by another geriatric, Konstantin Chernenko, who had to be held up under the armpits. But there was talk of a fresh wind blowing in the Kremlin, a younger man called Gorbachev. By the coffee Turkin was recruited; from henceforth he would stay 'in place' at the heart of the KGB but work for the CIA.

Monk's luck was in because his superior, the chief of station, was away on vacation. Had he been in place, Monk would have had to hand Turkin over to others to handle. Instead it fell to him to encode the top secret cable to Langley describing the recruitment.

Of course there was initial scepticism. A major of Line KR right in the heart of the KGB was a top prize. In a series of covert meetings throughout Madrid for the rest of the summer Monk learned about his Soviet contemporary.

Born in Omsk, western Siberia, in 1951, the son of an engineer in the military industry, Turkin had not been able to get into the university he wanted at the age of eighteen and had gone into the army. He was assigned to Border Guards, nominally under the control of the KGB. There he was 'spotted' and posted to the Dzerzhinsky High School, counter-intelligence department, where he learned English. He shone.

With a small group he was transferred to the KGB foreign intelligence training centre, the prestigious Andropov Institute. Like Monk, on the other side of the world, he had been tagged as a high flyer. For those with no KGB experience and no foreign language there were two- and three-year courses at the institute. Turkin had both and did a one-year course. On graduating with distinction he was permitted to join Directorate K of the First Chief Directorate—counter-intelligence within the intelligence-gathering arm. Heading 'K' in those days

was the youngest general in the KGB, Oleg Kalugin.

Still only twenty-seven, Turkin married in 1978 and had a son, Yuri, the same year. In 1982 he got his first foreign posting, to Nairobi; his primary task – to try to penetrate the CIA station in Kenya and recruit agents either there or throughout the Kenyan establishment. It was a posting to be cut short prematurely by his son's illness.

Turkin delivered his first package to the CIA in October. Knowing that a complete covert communications system had been set up, Monk took the package back to Langley personally. It turned out to be dynamite. Turkin blew away just about the entire KGB operation in Spain. To protect their source, the Americans would release what they had bit by bit to the Spanish, ensuring that each round-up of Spaniards spying for Moscow would appear as a fluke, or good detection by the Spanish. In each case the KGB was permitted to learn (via Turkin) that the agent himself had made a silly mistake leading to his own capture. Moscow suspected nothing but lost its whole Iberian operation.

In his three years in Madrid Turkin rose to become Deputy Resident, which gave him access to just about everything. In 1987 he would transfer back to Moscow and after a year became head of the entire Directorate K Branch within the KGB's huge *apparat* in East Germany until the final pull-out after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and then of Communism and the reunification with West Germany in 1990. In all that time, though he passed hundreds of messages and packages of intelligence through dead-letter boxes and cut-outs, he insisted that he be handled by only one man, his friend-across-the-Wall, Jason Monk. It was an unusual arrangement. Most spies have several handlers, or 'controllers' in a six-year career, but Turkin insisted and Langley had to put up with it.

When Monk got back to Langley that fall of 1986 he was summoned to the office of Carey Jordan.

'I've seen the stuff,' said the new DDO. 'It's good. We thought he might be a double, but the Spanish agents he has blown away are Grade A. Your man's on the level. Well done.'

Monk nodded his appreciation.

'There is just one thing,' said Jordan. 'I didn't get into this game five minutes ago. Your report on the recruitment strategy is adequate, but there's something else, isn't there? Why did he volunteer?'

Monk told the DDO what he had not put in the report, the illness of his son in Nairobi and the medications from the Walter Reed.

'I ought to can your ass,' said Jordan at length. He rose and walked to the window. The forest of birch and beech running down to the Potomac was a blaze of red and gold, the leaves just about to fall.

'Jesus,' he said after a while. 'I don't know any guy in the agency would have let him get away without a favour for those drugs. You might never have seen him again. Madrid was a fluke. You know what Napoleon said about generals?'

'No, sir.'

'He said, "I don't care if they're good, I want 'em lucky." You're weird, but you're lucky. You know we'll have to transfer your man to SE Division?'

At the very top of the CIA was always the Director. Under him came the two main directorates, Intelligence and Operations. The first, headed by the Deputy Director (Intelligence) or DDI, had the task of collating and analysing the great mass of raw information pouring in, to produce from it the intelligence digest that would go out to the White House, the National Security Council, State Department, Pentagon *et al.*

The actual gathering was done by Operations, headed by the DDO. The Operations Directorate was subdivided into divisions according to a global map - Latin America Division, Middle East, South-East Asia and so forth. But for forty years of the Cold War, from 1950 to 1990 and the collapse of Communism, the

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Jock Macdonald, head of station for the British SIS in Moscow, had a dinner he could not avoid on the night of 17 July. He returned briefly to his office to deposit some notes he had made during dinner – he never trusted his apartment not to be burgled – and his eye fell on the black-covered file. Idly he flicked it open and began to read. It was in Russian, of course, and typed, but he was bilingual.

In fact he never went home that night. Just after midnight he called his wife to explain, then returned to the file. There were some forty pages, divided into twenty subject-headings.

He read the passages concerning the re-establishment of a one-party state and the reactivation of the chain of slave-labour camps for dissidents and other undesirables.

He perused the tracts dealing with the final solution of the Jewish community and the treatment of the Chechens in particular, plus all the other racial minorities.

He studied the pages concerning the non-aggression pact with Poland to buffer the western border, and the reconquest of Belarus, the Baltic States and the southern republics of the USSR, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Moldova.

He ingested the paragraphs dealing with the re-establishment of the nuclear arsenal and the targeting of the surrounding enemies. He pored over the pages describing the destiny of the Russian Orthodox Church and all other religious denominations.

According to the manifesto, the shamed and humiliated armed forces, now brooding sullenly under canvas, would be rearmed and re-equipped, not as a force for defence but for reconquest. The populations of the reacquired territories would work as serfs to produce food for the Russian masters. Control over them would reside in the ethnic Russian populations in the

the Catholic Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1745, to be wiped out a year later at the field of Culloden by the Protestant Hanoverian Duke of Cumberland, third son of George II.

The head of station came from the heart of that tradition. His father was a Macdonald of Fassifern, but his mother had been a scion of house of Fraser of Lovat and had brought him up in the faith. He began to walk. Down the embankment to the next bridge, the Bolshoi Most, then across towards St Basil's Cathedral. He skirted the onion-domed edifice and wended his way through the waking city centre towards New Square, then left again.

Leaving New Square he saw the first early-morning queues for the soup kitchens beginning to form. There was one just behind the square where once the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR had held sway.

A number of foreign charitable organizations were involved in the relief aid to Russia, as was the United Nations on a more official basis, and the West had donated generously, as earlier to Romanian orphanages and Bosnian refugees. But the task was formidable, as the destitutes from the countryside poured towards the capital, were rounded up and expelled by the militia and reappeared again either as the same people or their replacements.

They stood in the pre-dawn half-light, old and ragged, women with babies at their breasts, the peasantry of Russia unchanged since Potemkin, with their ox-like passivity and patience. In late July the weather was warm enough to keep all alive. But when the cold came, that bitter cutting cold of the Russian winter . . . The previous January had been bad, but as for the next . . . Jock Macdonald shook his head at the thought and marched on.

His path brought him to Lubyanka Square, formerly known as Dzerzhinsky Square. Here for decades had stood the statue of Iron Feliks, Lenin's founder of

the original terror machine, the Cheka. At the back of the square stood the great grey and ochre block known simply as Moscow Centre, headquarters of the KGB.

Behind the old KGB building lies the infamous Lubyanka jail where confessions too numerous to count had been extracted and executions carried out. Behind the jail are two streets, Big Lubyanka and Little Lubyanka. He chose the second. Halfway up Little Lubyanka is the church of St Louis, where many of the diplomatic community and some of the few Russian Catholics go to worship.

Two hundred yards behind him and out of his vision because of the KGB block, a number of tramps were sleeping in the broad doorway of the giant toyshop, Detsky Mir or Children's World.

Two burly men in jeans and black leather jackets walked into the shop doorway and began to turn the sleeping bodies over. One wore an old army greatcoat with a few soiled medals clinging to the lapel. The men stiffened, then bent over him again, shaking him out of his slumber.

'Is your name Zaitsev?' snapped one of them. The old man nodded. The other man whipped a portable phone out of his blouse pocket, punched in some numbers and spoke. Within five minutes a Moskvich swerved to the kerb. The two men hustled the figure between them and threw him into the rear, piling in on top of him. The old man tried to say something before he went in, and there was a glint of stainless steel at the front of his mouth.

The car raced round the square, drove behind the great building that once housed the All-Russian Insurance Corporation before becoming a house of terror, and roared up Little Lubyanka, passing the figure of a British diplomat on the pavement.

Macdonald let himself into the church with the aid of a drowsy sacristan, walked to the end of the aisle and knelt in front of the altar. He looked up and the figure

of the crucified Christ looked down. And he prayed.

A man's prayers are a very private thing, but what he prayed was, 'Dear God, I beg you, let it be a forgery. For if it is not, a great and dark evil is going to descend upon us.'

'Check it out. If she can, put her together with Celia Stone. Meanwhile I'm going to have a chat with Celia myself. Two other things. Chummy may show up again, try to approach us, hang around the building. I'm going to ask Corporal Meadows and Sergeant Reynolds to keep an eye on Main Gate. If they spot him, they'll report to either of you. Try and get him inside for a cup of tea. Second, he may try other tricks elsewhere and get himself arrested. Gracie, don't you have somebody in the police?'

Fields nodded. He was the longest-serving in Moscow of the three, inheriting when he arrived a range of low-level sources around Moscow and creating several of his own.

'Inspector Novikov. He's with Homicide at the Petrovka headquarters building. Occasionally useful.'

'Have a word,' said Macdonald. 'Nothing to do with documents thrown into cars. Just say there's an old codger been pestering our staff out on the street, demanding a private interview with the ambassador. We're not fussed about it, but we'd like to ask him to leave us alone: Show him the picture, if we get a picture, but don't let him keep it. When's your next meet?'

'Nothing scheduled,' said Fields. 'I call him from phone booths.'

'OK, see if he can help. Meanwhile, I'm going to go over to London for a couple of days. Gracie, you hold the fort.'

Celia Stone was intercepted in the lobby when she arrived and, somewhat startled, was asked to join Macdonald, not in his office but in Conference Room 'A'. She did not know this room was the bug-proof one.

Macdonald was very kind and talked with her for almost an hour. He noted every detail and she accepted his story that the old man had pestered other staff with his demands to see the ambassador. Would she agree to help draw up a portrait of the old tramp? Of course she would; anything to help.

Attended by Hugo Gray, she spent the lunch hour

Incompetence, lethargy and complacency within the CIA, luck for the traitor, a skilful disinformation campaign by the KGB to protect their mole, more lethargy, squeamishness and indolence at Langley, red herrings; more luck for the traitor and finally the memory of James Angleton.

Angleton had once been head of CI at the agency, rising to become a legend and ending deranged by paranoia. This strange man, without private life or humour, became convinced there was a KGB mole, code-named Sasha, inside Langley. In fanatic pursuit of this non-existent traitor, he crippled the careers of loyal officer after loyal officer until he finally brought Ops Directorate to its knees. Those who survived him, risen by 1985 to high office, were desolated at the thought of doing what had to be done – searching with rigour for the real mole.

As for the first question, the answer can be given in two words: Ken Mulgrew.

In twenty years with the agency before he turned traitor, Ames had had three postings outside Langley. In Turkey his chief of station deemed him to be a complete waste of space; the veteran Dewey Clarridge loathed and despised him from the start.

In the New York office he had a lucky break which brought him kudos. Although the Under-Secretary General of the United Nations Arkady Shevchenko had been working for the CIA before Ames arrived, and his final defection to the States in April 1978 was masterminded by another officer, Ames 'handled' the Ukrainian in between. He was by then already becoming a very serious drinker.

His third posting, in Mexico, was a fiasco. He was consistently drunk, insulted colleagues and foreigners, fell down and was helped home by the Mexican police, broke every standing operational procedure imaginable and recruited nobody. He spent much of his time drinking for days on end with a Russian, Igor Shurygin, who was head of counter-intelligence for the KGB at the

was satisfied no detail had been left out. There was not really much to tell.

Only when he explained why he had done it was the colonel's face masked in disbelief.

'A beer? The English gave you a beer?'

By midday the colonel was convinced he had it all. The chances were, he reckoned, that confronted with this scarecrow the young Englishwoman would throw the file away, but he could not be sure. He despatched a car with four trusted men to stake out the embassy and wait for the small red car. Then follow it to wherever she lived, and report back.

Just after three he gave final orders to his guards and left. As he drove out of the compound an A-300 airbus with British Airways livery on its tailfin turned over northern Moscow and headed west. He did not notice. He ordered his driver to take him back to the house off Kiselny Boulevard.

There were four of them. The Rabbit's legs would have buckled, but they knew that so two of them held him up, fingers digging hard into his upper arms. The other two were one front, one back. They worked slowly and placed their punches diligently.

The big fists were wrapped in heavy knobbed brass knuckles. The punches crushed his kidneys, tore his liver and ruptured his spleen. A kick pulped his old testicles. The man at the front drove into the belly, then moved up to the chest. He fainted twice but a bucket of cold water brought him round and the pain returned. His legs ceased to function so they held his light frame on tiptoe.

Towards the end the ribs in the skinny chest cracked and sprung, two driving deep into the lungs. Something warm and sweet and sticky rose in his throat so that he could not breathe.

His vision narrowed to a tunnel and he saw not the grey concrete blocks of the room behind the camp armoury, but a bright sunny day with a sandy road and pine trees. He could not see the speaker, but a voice was

The coup made Androsov an instant star and Ames the most vital asset in the firmament. First Chief Directorate's commanding general, Vladimir Kryuchkov, originally a snoop put into the First CD by the ever-suspicious Andropov but since risen to higher things, at once ordered the formation of a top-secret group to be detached from all other tasks and assigned only to handle the Ames product. Ames was code-named Kolokol, meaning Bell, and the task force became the Kolokol group.

A senior CIA officer later calculated that forty-five anti-KGB operations, virtually the CIA's entire menu, collapsed after the summer of 1985. Not a single top agent working for the CIA whose name had been on the 301 files continued to function after the spring of 1986.

In those shopping bags were descriptions of fourteen agents, almost the SE Division's entire array of assets within the USSR. The actual names were not included, but they did not need to be.

Any CI detective, told that there is a mole inside his own network, and told that the man was recruited in Bogotá, then worked in Moscow and is now being serviced in Lagos, will work it out pretty fast. Only one career will match those postings. A check of the records usually suffices.

One of the fourteen was actually a long-time agent of the British. The Americans never knew his name, but as London had given Langley his product, the CIA knew a bit about him and could deduce a bit more. He was actually a colonel of the KGB who had been recruited in Denmark in the early seventies and had been a British asset for twelve years. Already under some suspicion, he had nevertheless returned to Moscow from his post as Rezident at the Soviet embassy in London for one last visit. Ames's betrayal simply confirmed the Russian suspicions of Colonel Oleg Gordievsky.

Another of the fourteen was lucky, or smart. Sergei Bokhan was an officer of Soviet Military Intelligence posted in Athens. He was abruptly ordered back to

Moscow on the grounds that his son was having exam problems at military academy. He happened to know the boy was doing fine. Having deliberately missed the booked plane home, he contacted the CIA station in Athens and was brought out of there in a hurry.

The other twelve were all caught. Some were inside the USSR, others abroad. Those abroad were ordered home on a variety of pretexts, all false. All were arrested on arrival.

All twelve were intensively interrogated and all twelve confessed. The alternative was even more 'intensive' interrogation. Two escaped with years in slave-labour camps and now live in America. The other ten were tortured and shot.

Jock Macdonald's first port of call on arriving in the late afternoon at Heathrow was the headquarters building of the Secret Intelligence Service at Vauxhall Cross. He tired, although he had dared to take a catnap on the , and the notion of going to his club for a bath and real sleep was tempting. The flat he and his wife, still in Moscow, retained in Chelsea was not available, being let to others.

But he wanted the file in the briefcase still attached to his wrist under lock and key inside the HQ building before he could relax. The service car that had met him at Heathrow dropped him in front of the green-glass and sandstone monster on the south bank of the Thames that now housed the service since its move from shabby old Century House seven years earlier.

He penetrated the security systems at the entrance, assisted by the eager young probationer who had accompanied him from the airport, and finally lodged the file in the safe of the head of Russia Division. His colleague had welcomed him warmly but with some curiosity.

'Drink?' asked Jeffrey Marchbanks, indicating what appeared to be a filing cabinet clothed in timber

panelling but which both men knew contained a cocktail bar.

'Good idea. Been a long day, and a rough one. Scotch.'

Marchbanks opened the cabinet door and contemplated his repertoire. Macdonald was a Scot and took the brew of his ancestors neat. The divisional head poured a double tot of the Macallan, with no ice, and handed it over.

'Knew you were coming, of course, but not why. Tell me.'

Macdonald narrated his story from the beginning.

'It must be a hoax, of course,' said Marchbanks at last.

'On the face of it, yes,' agreed Macdonald. 'But it must be the most unsubtle bloody hoax I've ever heard of. Who's the hoaxer?'

'Komarov's political enemies, one supposes.'

'He's got enough of them,' said Macdonald. 'But what a way to present it. Damn well asking for it to be thrown away unread. It was only a fluke young Gray found it.'

'Well, the next stop is to read it. You've read it, I suppose?'

'All last night. As a political manifesto, it's . . . unpleasant.'

'In Russian, of course?'

'Yes.'

'Mmmm. I suspect my Russian won't be up to it. We'll need a translation.'

'I'd prefer to do that myself,' said Macdonald. 'Just in case it's not a hoax. You'll see why when you read it.'

'All right, Jock. Your call. What do you want?'

'Club first. Bath, shave, dinner and a sleep. Come back here about midnight and work on it till opening hours. See you again then.'

Marchbanks nodded.

'All right, you'd better borrow this office. I'll notify Security.'

When Jeffrey Marchbanks returned to his office just before ten the following morning, he found Jock Macdonald full-length on his sofa with his shoes and jacket off and tie loosened. The black file was on his desk with a pile of unbound white sheets beside it.

'That's it,' he said. 'In the language of Shakespeare. By the way, the disk is still in the machine but it should be got out and logged safely.'

Marchbanks nodded, ordered coffee, pulled on his glasses and began to read. A pretty and leggy blonde, whose parents clearly hunted foxes, brought coffee, smiled and left.

Marchbanks broke his reading. 'The man's mad, of course.'

'If it is Komarov writing, then yes. Or very bad. Or both. Either way, potentially dangerous. Read on.'

Marchbanks did so. When he had finished he puffed out his cheeks and exhaled. 'It has to be a hoax. No-one who meant it would ever write it down.'

'Unless he thought it was confined to his own inner core of fellow-fanatics,' suggested Macdonald.

'Stolen then?'

'Possibly. Forged, possibly. But who was the tramp, and how did *he* get hold of it? We don't know.'

Marchbanks pondered. He knew that if the Black Manifesto was a forgery and a hoax, there would be nothing but grief for the service if they took it seriously. If it turned out to be genuine, there would be even more grief if they did not.

'I think,' he said at length, 'I want to run this past the controller, maybe even the chief.'

The Controller Eastern Hemisphere, David Brownlow, saw them at twelve and the chief offered the three of them lunch in his panelled top-floor dining-room with its panoramic views of the Thames and Vauxhall Bridge at one-fifteen.

Sir Henry Coombs was just short of sixty and in his final year as chief of the SIS. Like his predecessors right back to Maurice Oldfield, he had come up through the

ranks and honed his skills in the Cold War, which had ended a decade earlier. Unlike the CIA, whose directors were political appointments and not always skilful ones, the SIS had persuaded prime ministers for thirty years to give them a chief who had been through the mill.

And it worked. After 1985 three successive directors of the CIA had admitted they were told hardly anything of the true awfulness of the Ames affair until they read the newspapers. Henry Coombs had the trust of his subordinates and knew all the details he needed to know. And they knew that he knew.

He read the file while sipping his vichyssoise. But he read fast and he took it all in.

'This must be very tiresome for you, Jock, but tell it again.'

He listened attentively, asking two brief questions, then nodded. 'Your views, Jeffrey?'

After the head of Russia Division, he asked Brownlow, Controller East. Both said much the same. Is it true? We need to know.

'What intrigues me,' said Brownlow, 'is simply this: if all this is Komarov's true political agenda, why did he write it down? We all know even the most top-secret documents can be stolen.'

Sir Henry Coombs's deceptively mild eyes turned to his Moscow head of station. 'Any ideas, Jock?'

Macdonald shrugged. 'Why does anyone write down their innermost thoughts and plans? Why do people confess the unconfessable to their private diaries? Why do people keep impossibly intimate journals? Why do major corporations or services like ours store hypersensitive material? Perhaps it was intended as a very private briefing document for his own inner circle, or just a therapy for himself. Or perhaps it is just a forgery designed to damage the man. I don't know.'

'Ah, there you have it,' said Sir Henry. 'We don't know. But, having read it, I think we agree we must know. So many questions. How the hell did this come to be written? Is it really the work of Igor Komarov? Is

this appalling torrent of madness what he intends to fulfil if, or more likely when, he comes to power? If so, how was it stolen, who stole it, and why throw it at us? Or is it all a farrago of lies?’

He stirred his coffee and stared at the documents, both the original and Macdonald's copy, with profound distaste.

‘Sorry, Jock, but we’ve got to have those answers. I can’t take this up the river until we do. Possibly not then. It’s back to Moscow, Jock. I don’t know how you are going to do it, that’s your business. But we need to know.’

The chief of the SIS, like all his predecessors, had two tasks. One was professional, to run the best covert intelligence service for the nation that he could. The other was political, to liaise with the Joint Intelligence Committee, the mandarins of their principal customers, the Foreign Office, who were not always easy, to fight for a budget with the Cabinet Office and to cultivate friends among the politicians who made up the Government. It was a multifaceted task and not for the squeamish or foolish.

The last thing he needed was to produce some harum-scarum story of a tramp throwing into the car of an extremely junior diplomat some file that now had footprints on it and described a programme of deranged cruelty that might or might not be genuine. He would be shot down in flames and he knew it.

‘I’ll fly back this afternoon, chief.’

‘Nonsense, Jock, you’ve had two miserable nights in a row. Take in a show, get eight hours in a bed. Grab tomorrow’s first schedule back to the land of the Cossacks.’ He glanced at his watch. ‘And now, if you’ll excuse me . . .’

The three filed out. Macdonald never made the theatre or the eight hours in bed. There was a message in Marchbanks’s office, fresh from the cipher room. Celia Stone’s apartment had been raided and torn apart. She had come home from dinner and disturbed two

masked men who had clubbed her with a chair-leg. She was in hospital but not in danger.

Silently Marchbanks handed the slip to Macdonald who read it also.

'Oh, shit,' he said.

WASHINGTON, JULY 1985

The tip, when it came, was, as so often in the world of espionage, oblique, third-hand and possibly a complete waste of time.

An American volunteer, working with a UNICEF aid programme in the unlovely Marxist-Leninist republic of South Yemen, was back in New York on furlough and had dinner with a former classmate who was with the FBI.

Describing the enormous Soviet military aid programme being offered to South Yemen by Moscow, the United Nations worker described an evening at the bar of the Rock Hotel in Aden when he had fallen into conversation with a Russian army major.

Like most of the Russians there, the man spoke virtually no Arabic but communicated with the Yemenis, citizens of a former British colony, in English. The American, aware of the unpopularity of the USA in South Yemen, had the custom of telling people he was Swiss. He told the Russian this.

The Russian, becoming increasingly more drunk and out of earshot of any of his fellow-countrymen, launched into a violent denunciation of the leadership of his own country. He accused them of massive corruption, criminal waste and of not giving a damn about their own people in their efforts to subsidize the Third World.

Having delivered himself of his dinner-table anecdote, the aid worker would have passed out of the story, if the FBI man had not mentioned the matter to a friend in the CIA's New York office.

The CIA man, having consulted his bureau chief, saw

up a second dinner with the aid worker at which the wine flowed copiously. To be provocative, the CIA man lamented how the Russians were making great strides in cementing friendships with the nations of the Third World, especially in the Middle East.

Eager to show off his superior knowledge, the UNICEF worker broke in that this was simply not so, that he had personal knowledge that the Russians tended to loathe the Arabs and to become quickly exasperated at their inability to master simple technology and their ability to break or crash anything they were given to play with.

'I mean, take where I just came back from . . .' he said.

By the end of the meal the CIA man had a picture of a huge military advisory group whose members were at their wits' end with frustration and could see no point in their presence in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. He also had a description of a seriously fed-up major: tall, muscular, rather oriental face. And a name: Solomin.

The report went back to Langley where it came to the desk of the head of SE Division, who discussed it with Carey Jordan.

'It may be nothing and it may be dangerous,' said the DDO to Jason Monk three days later. 'But do you think you could get into South Yemen and have a talk with this Major Solomin?'

Monk consulted lengthily with the back-room experts on the Middle East and soon realized South Yemen was a tough nut. The USA was in deep disfavour with the Communist government there, which was being ardently courted by Moscow. Despite that, there was a surprisingly large foreign community, apart from the Russians.

The British, although they had virtually fought their way out of Aden in 1976, were brought back in strength. The Crown Agents were helping with foreign procurement, De la Rue was printing banknotes and Tootal was building a textile factory. Massey Ferguson had a tractor

operation and Costain was running up a biscuit factory in the suburb of Shaykh 'Uthmān where the paras had once shot their way from street to street.

British engineers were involved in a new freshwater supply and a flash-flood protection scheme, while the British charity Save the Children was dispensing medication in the hinterland, alongside the French charity Médecins sans Frontières.

That left the United Nations with three operations: FAO was helping with agriculture, UNICEF with the street-children and WHO with health projects.

However well one speaks a foreign language, it is a daunting prospect to pose as a member of that nation and then run into the real article. Monk decided to avoid pretending to be British because the Brits would spot the difference in two minutes. The same with the French:

But the USA was the principal paymaster of the United Nations and had influence, overt and covert, in a number of the agencies. Research revealed there was no Spaniard in the Food and Agriculture mission to Aden. A new persona was created and it was quietly agreed Monk would travel to Aden in October on a one-month visa as a visiting inspector from FAO headquarters in Rome to check on progress. He would be, according to his papers, Estéban Martínez Llorca. In Madrid, the still-grateful Spanish government provided genuine paperwork.

Jock Macdonald arrived back too late to visit Celia Stone in hospital but was there the next morning, 20 July. The Assistant Press Attaché was bandaged and woozy, but able to talk. She had gone home at the normal hour, she had noticed no-one following. But then she was not trained for that.

After three hours in her flat, she had gone out for dinner with a girlfriend from the Canadian embassy. She had returned about eleven-thirty. The thieves must

have heard her key in the lock because all was quiet when she entered. She put on the light in the hall and noticed the door to the sitting-room was open and the room was dark. That was odd, because she had left a lamp burning. The sitting-room windows gave onto the central courtyard, and the light behind the curtains would indicate someone was at home. She thought the bulb must have blown.

She reached the sitting-room door and two figures came at her out of the darkness. One swung something and hit her on the side of her head. As she went down she half-heard, half-felt two men jumping over her and heading for the main door. She passed out. When she came to – she did not know how much later – she crawled to her telephone and rang a neighbour. Then she fainted again and woke up in hospital. There was nothing more she could tell.

Macdonald went to the flat. The ambassador had protested to the Foreign Ministry, which had hit the roof and complained to Interior. They had ordered the Moscow prosecutor's office to send their best investigator. A full report would be on its way as soon as possible. In Moscow that meant: do not hold your breath.

The message to London had been wrong in one respect. Celia Stone had not been hit by a chair-leg but by a small china statuette. It had shattered. Had it been metal she could have been dead.

There were Russian detectives in the flat still and they happily answered the British diplomat's questions. The two militiamen on the barrier to the courtyard had admitted no Russian car, so the men must have come on foot. The militiamen had seen no-one pass them. They would say that anyway, thought Macdonald.

The door had not been forced so it must have been picked unless the burglars had had a key, which was unlikely. They were possibly looking for hard currency these difficult times. It was very regrettable. Macdonald nodded.

Privately he thought the intruders might have been from the Black Guards, but more likely it was a contract job by the local underworld. Or ex-KGB hirelings – there were enough about. Moscow burglars hardly ever touched diplomatic residences: too much fall-out. Cars on the open street were fair game, but not guarded apartments. The search had been thorough and professional, but nothing had been taken, not even some costume jewellery in the bedroom. A pro job and for a single item, not found. Macdonald feared the worst.

Back at the embassy Macdonald had an idea, rang the prosecutor's office and asked if the detective assigned to the case would be kind enough to call on him. Inspector Chernov came to visit at three p.m.

'I may be able to help you,' said Macdonald.

The detective raised an eyebrow. 'I would be most grateful,' he said.

'Our young lady, Miss Stone, was feeling better this morning. Much better.'

'Deeply gratified,' said the Inspector.

'So much so that she was able to give a reasonable description of one of her attackers. She saw him in the light coming from the hall just before the blow struck.'

'Her first statement indicated she saw neither of them,' said Chernov.

'Memory sometimes returns in cases like these. You saw her yesterday afternoon, Inspector?'

'Yes, at four p.m. She was awake.'

'But still dizzy, I expect. This morning she was in a clearer state of mind. Now, one of the wives of our staff here is something of an artist. With Miss Stone's help she was able to create a picture.'

He handed over his desk a portrait in charcoal and crayon. The inspector's face lit up.

'This is extraordinarily useful,' he said. 'I will circulate it among the Burglary Squad. A man of this age must have a record.' He rose to go. Macdonald rose.

'Just pleased to be helpful,' he said. They shook hands and the detective left.

During the lunch-hour both Celia Stone and the artist had been briefed on the new story. Neither understood why, but agreed to confirm it if Inspector Chernov ever interviewed them. In fact he never did.

Nor did his burglary teams, scattered across Moscow, recognize the face. But they put it on the walls of their squad rooms anyway.

MOSCOW, JULY 1985

In the wake of the windfall harvest just arrived from Aldrich Ames, the KGB did something quite extraordinary.

It is an unbreakable rule in the Great Game that if an agency suddenly acquires a priceless 'asset' deep in the heart of the enemy, that asset must be protected. Thus, when the asset reveals a host of turncoats, the newly enlightened agency will pick up those turncoats very slowly and carefully, in each case creating a seemingly different reason for his capture.

Only when their asset has escaped from danger and is safely behind the lines may the agents he has betrayed be picked up all at once. To do otherwise would be the equivalent of taking a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* to say: 'Hi there! We have just acquired a major mole right inside your outfit, and look what he has given us!'

As Ames was still very much at the heart of the CIA and with hopefully years of good service to come, the First Chief Directorate would have liked to abide by the rules and pick up the fourteen 'blown' turncoats slowly and carefully. In this they were completely overruled, against their almost tearful protests, by Mikhail Gorbachev.

Sorting through the harvest from Washington, the Kolokol group realized that some of the descriptions were immediately identifiable while others would need careful checking to track down. Of the 'immediates', some were still posted abroad and would have to be

carefully lured back home in a manner so skilful they would not smell a rat. It might take months.

The second decision they made was not to involve their rivals, the Second Chief Directorate. Accustomed to operating abroad, they did not realize they would seriously underperform on the streets of Moscow.

They would begin, they decided, with the 'British' agent, Colonel Oleg Gordievsky. For one thing he was already under suspicion, the result of years of patient detective work. A man's description of a KGB officer of colonel rank who had just returned to Moscow fitted Gordievsky like a glove and confirmed his guilt. So without telling anybody, the First CD put him under total surveillance inside Moscow, normally a speciality of the Second Directorate. It turned out to be a fiasco.

Gordievsky was no fool and he knew his time was short. He should never have returned home. He should have accepted the urgent offers of his friends in London to stay there and defect in fact as, twelve years earlier, he had defected in spirit.

There was a procedure the British had given him, a way of saying, even under surveillance, 'I'm in trouble: I need help NOW.' He used it and the message was received. The SIS formed a plan to get him out, but it needed the help of the embassy. The British ambassador, supported by the Foreign Office, would have none of it.

The then chief of the SIS used his prerogative of asking for and getting a private meeting with his Prime Minister. He explained the problem.

Oddly, Mrs Thatcher recalled Gordievsky. The previous year Mikhail Gorbachev, before appointed to the presidency, had visited London and much impressed her. Sitting by his side as interpreter was a diplomat from the Soviet embassy, Oleg Gordievsky. She had no idea then that he was working for her, but was impressed that her briefings on Gorbachev's private thoughts were so amazingly accurate. Gordievsky had been passing them over during the night.

Now she came out of her chair with the baby-blues flashing. 'Of course we must get him out of there,' she decreed. 'He's a brave man and one of us.'

Within an hour the Foreign Secretary and the ambassador had been overruled. On the morning of 19 July the gates of the embassy rolled open and cars began to come out, one after the other. The KGB watchers were overwhelmed. One by one their surveillance cars set off after the Brits, who all went in different directions. At last there were no Russian cars left at all. Then two identical Ford Transit vans came out. No-one followed them. One swerved up beside Gordievsky on his morning jog, and a voice yelled 'Oleg, get in.' The colonel jumped for the open side-door.

Behind him the two tails from the First Chief Directorate yelled for their own back-up car, which raced up the street and paused to pick them up.

The snatch had deliberately been done near a corner, round which the van disappeared. Once it had done so, it shot into an alley. The duplicate pulled away from the kerb, so when the Russians came round the corner they saw one white van and followed it. It went for miles and miles. Eventually it was surrounded and stopped, but contained only the embassy vegetables. The one bearing Gordievsky was safely inside the embassy compound.

There a team of army mechanics had been working on a long-base Landrover, creating a narrow compartment beneath the transmission shaft. Into this the Russian was squeezed, and two days later the Landrover set off for Finland. It was stopped on the Soviet side of the Finnish border and searched, despite diplomatic protocol, but nothing was found. An hour later, deep in the Finnish forests, a very stiff Oleg Gordievsky was eased out of his prison and driven to Helsinki.

A few days later the news was out. The Soviet Foreign Ministry protested to the British ambassador, who kept a very stiff upper lip and replied that he did not know what they were talking about.

Within a few months Gordievsky was in Washington, sharing his knowledge with the CIA. Among the debriefing officers, smiling but privately terrified, was Aldrich Ames. What, if anything, did the Russian know about an American traitor? Fortunately for Ames, the answer was nothing. Nobody did.

Jeffrey Marchbanks thought there might be a way he could help his colleague in Moscow in his search for the authenticity, or lack of it, of the Black Manifesto.

One of Macdonald's problems was that he had no reasonable means of gaining access to the person of Igor Komarov. Marchbanks calculated that a personal in-depth interview with the leader of the Union of Patriotic Forces might give some clue as to whether the man who portrayed himself as an admittedly right-wing conservative and nationalist hid beneath his veneer the ambitions of a raging Nazi.

He thought he might know someone who could get that interview. The previous winter he had been on a pheasant shoot and among the guests had been the newly appointed editor of Britain's leading Conservative daily newspaper. On 21 July Marchbanks called the editor, reminded him of the pheasant shoot, and set up a lunch date for the following day at his club in St James's.

MOSCOW, JULY 1985

The escape of Gordievsky caused a blazing row in Moscow. It took place on the last day of the month in the personal office on the third floor of the KGB headquarters on Dzerzhinsky Square of the chairman of the KGB himself.

It was a gloomy office that had in its time been the den of some of the bloodiest monsters the planet has known. Yagoda had sat there, and Yezhov, following Stalin's orders to soak the soil of Russia in the blood of

millions. Beria the psychopathic paedophile had followed, with Serov, Semichastny and the recently dead Yuri Andropov, who held the post longer than anyone, fifteen years from 1963 to 1978.

Orders had been signed at the T-shaped desk that caused men to shriek under torture, die of hypothermia in the wastelands of Siberia or kneeling in a bleak courtyard with pistol bullet in the brain.

General Viktor Chebrikov did not quite have those powers any more. Things were changing and execution orders had to be approved by the president himself. But for traitors they would still be signed, and the conference of that day would ensure that more were yet to come.

Very much on the defensive in front of the chairman's desk was the head of the First Chief Directorate, Vladimir Kryuchkov. It was his men who had fouled up so badly. On the attack was the head of the Second Chief Directorate, the short, chunky, bull-shouldered General Vitali Boyarov, and he was spitting angry.

'The whole thing has been a complete . . . *razebaistvo*,' he stormed. Even among the generals, the use of locker-room language was very much the thing, a proof of soldierly crudeness and working-class origins. The word means 'fuck-up'.

'It won't happen again,' muttered Kryuchkov defensively.

'Let us agree then,' said the chairman 'on a structure from which we do not deviate. On the sovereign territory of the USSR traitors will be arrested and interrogated by the Second Chief Directorate. If there are ever any more traitors identified, that is what will happen. Understood?'

'There will be more,' muttered Kryuchkov. 'Thirteen more.'

There was silence in the room for several seconds. 'Are you trying to tell us something, Vladimir Aleksandrovich?' asked the chairman quietly.

That was when Kryuchkov revealed what had

happened at Chadwick's in Washington six weeks earlier. Boyarov let out a long whistle.

'What are you doing about it?' asked Chebrikov.

'I have set up a special taskforce to handle the product. One by one they are producing the identities of fourteen men – well, thirteen actually – who work for the CIA. All Russians. Some may take longer to identify than others.'

General Chebrikov made his ruling within the day. The Kolokol group out at Yazenevo would analyse the product. That was foreign intelligence business. But the moment a traitor was identified, his name would be passed to the joint Krysolov (ratcatcher) commission for arrest and interrogation. Second CD would make the arrest and imprisonment. First CD officers would have to be present at interrogation sessions in order to know what questions to ask and what answers they needed.

Otherwise, detention and lodgement would be for the Second CD to decide, and any unwillingness to answer questions or confess would be taken care of by Second CD in the usual manner.

Within a week, General Chebrikov, flushed with his agency's success, revealed all to Mikhail Gorbachev. The reaction surprised him. Far from being pleased at the achievement of the greatest coup in modern espionage against the Americans, the new president, appointed only the previous March, was horrified by the extent and level of the CIA penetration of Soviet society and especially of the two intelligence arms, the KGB and the military agency, the GRU.

Overruling the KGB's pleas for measured caution, he ordered that those exposed by Aldrich Ames be all picked up at once, or as soon as possible.

Out at Yazenevo the wily old general heading the Kolokol group, former head of the Illegals Directorate Yuri Drozdov, assumed this meant Ames's goose was cooked. With such a blitzkrieg of arrests of their agents, Langley would know they had a mole, investigate and find him. To his utter amazement, they didn't.

HQ of the Second Chief Directorate.

Since then he had never left Moscow, working out of headquarters mainly against the hated Americans, covering their embassy and tailing their diplomatic personnel. Between this he spent a year in the investigative service, before returning to Second CD. Superior officers and instructors had taken the time to note in the files his passionate hatred of Anglo-Americans, Jews, spies and traitors, and an unexplained but acceptable level of sadism in his interrogations.

General Boyarov closed the dossier with a smile. He had his man. If quick results were wanted and no messing about, Colonel Anatoli Grishin was the man for him.

CHAPTER FIVE

Halfway up St James's Street is an anonymous greystone building with a blue door and some potted green shrubs outside. It bears no name. Those who know what and where it is will have no trouble finding it; those who do not will be those who have no invitation to enter and will pass on by. Brooks's Club does not advertise.

It is, however, a favourite watering-hole of civil servants from Whitehall not far away. It was here that Jeffrey Marchbanks met the editor of the *Daily Telegraph* for lunch on 22 July.

Brian Worthing was forty-eight and had been a journalist for over twenty years when, two years earlier, the Canadian proprietor Conrad Black had headhunted him from *The Times* to take over the vacant editorship. Worthing's background was as foreign and war correspondent. He had covered the Falklands War as a young man, his first real war, and later the Gulf War in 1990-91.

The table Marchbanks had secured for himself was a small one in a corner, far enough from the others not to be overheard. Not that anyone would dream of attempting such a thing. In Brooks's a chap would never dream of eavesdropping on another chap's conversation, but old habits die hard.

'I think I probably mentioned at Spurnal that I was with the Foreign Office,' said Marchbanks over the potted shrimp.

'I recall that you did,' said Worthing. He had been in two minds whether to accept the lunch invitation at all. His day would as always last from ten in the morning until after sundown, and taking two hours out for lunch - three if you counted the haul from Canary Wharf up to the West End and back - had better be worth it.

'Well, actually I work at another building further

down the river from King Charles Street and on the other side,' said Marchbanks.

'Ah,' said the editor. He knew all about Vauxhall Cross though he had never been in it. Perhaps the lunch was going to produce something after all.

'My particular concern is Russia.'

'I don't envy you,' said Worthing, demolishing the last shrimp with a slice of thin brown bread. He was a big man with a notable appetite. 'Going to hell in a hand-basket, I would have thought.'

'Something like that. Since the death of Cherkassov the next prospect seems to be the forthcoming presidential elections.'

The two men fell silent as a young waitress brought the lamb chops and vegetables with a carafe of the house claret. Marchbanks poured.

'Bit of a foregone conclusion,' said Worthing.

'Our view precisely. The Communist revival has fizzled over the years and the reformers are at sixes and sevens. There seems to be nothing to stop Igor Komarov from taking the presidency.'

'Is that bad?' asked the editor. 'The last piece I saw about him, he appeared to be talking some sense. Get the currency back in shape, halt the slide to chaos, give the mafia a hard time. That sort of thing.'

Worthing prided himself on being a man of direct speech and tended to talk in staccato telegrams.

'Exactly, sounds wonderful. But he's still a bit of an enigma. What does he really intend to do? How, specifically does he intend to do it? He says he despises foreign credits, but how can he get by without them? More to the point, will he try to negate Russia's debts by paying them off in worthless roubles?'

'He wouldn't dare,' said Worthing. He knew the *Telegraph* had a resident correspondent in Moscow but he had not filed a piece on Komarov for some time.

'Wouldn't he now?' countered Marchbanks. 'We don't know. Some of his speeches are pretty extreme, but then in private conversation he persuades

visitors he's not such an ogre after all. Which is the real man?'

'I could ask our Moscow man to seek an interview.'

'Unlikely to be granted, I'm afraid,' suggested the spymaster. 'I believe just about every resident correspondent in Moscow does the same regularly. He only grants interviews with exceptional rarity and purports to loathe the foreign press.'

'I say, there's treacle tart!' said Worthing. 'I'll take it.'

The British in middle age are seldom less content than when being offered the sort of food they were fed in nursery school. The waitress brought treacle tart for both.

'So, how to get at the man?' asked Worthing.

'He has a young publicity adviser whose advice he seems to listen to. Boris Kuznetsov. Very bright, educated at one of the American Ivy League colleges. If there's a key, he's it. We understand he reads the western press every day and particularly likes the articles by your man Jefferson.'

Mark Jefferson was a staffer and regular contributor to the main feature page of the *Telegraph*. He dealt with politics, domestic and foreign, was a fine polemicist and a trenchant conservative. Worthing chewed on his treacle tart.

'It's an idea,' he said at length.

'You see,' said Marchbanks, warming to his ploy, 'resident correspondents in Moscow are two a penny. But a star feature writer coming to do a major portrait of the coming leader, man-of-tomorrow sort of thing — that might appeal.'

Worthing thought it over. 'Perhaps we should think of pen-portraits of all three candidates. Keep a sort of balance.'

'Good idea,' said Marchbanks, who did not think so. 'But Komarov is the one who seems to fascinate people, one way or other. The other two are ciphers. Shall we go upstairs for coffee?'

'Yes, it's not a bad idea,' agreed Worthing when they

were seated in the upstairs drawing-room beneath the portrait of the Dilettantes. 'Touched as I am by your concern for our circulation figures, what do you want him asked?'

Marchbanks grinned at the directness of the editor.

'All right. Yes, we would like to know a few things that we can feed to our masters. Preferably something not in the article itself. They can also read the *Telegraph*, and do. What does the man *really* intend? What about the minority ethnic groups? There are ten million of them in Russia, and Komarov is a Russian supremacist. How does he really intend to produce the rebirth to glory of the Russian nation? In a word, the man's a mask. What lies behind the mask? Is there a secret agenda?'

'If there is,' mused Worthing, 'why should he reveal all to Jefferson?'

'One never knows. Men get carried away.'

'How does one get to this Kuznetsov?'

'Your man in Moscow will know him. A personal letter from Jefferson would probably be well received.'

'All right,' said Worthing as they descended the wide staircase to the lower hall. 'I can see a centre-page spread in my mind's eye. Not bad. If the man has something to say. I'll get on to our Moscow office.'

'If it works, I'd like to have a word with Jefferson afterwards.'

'Debriefing? Huh. He's pretty prickly, you know.'

'I shall be all olive oil,' said Marchbanks.

They parted on the pavement. Worthing's driver spotted him and glided up from his illegal parking spot opposite the Suntory to carry him back to Canary Wharf in Docklands. The spymaster decided to walk off the treacle tart and the wine.

WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 1985

Before he even began spying, back in 1984, Ames had applied for the post of Soviet Branch chief at the CIA'

big station in Rome. In September 1985 he learned he had got it.

This put him in a quandary. He did not know then that the KGB was unwillingly going to put him in extreme danger by picking up all the men he had betrayed with such speed.

The Rome slot would remove him from Langley and access to the 301 files and the Soviet Branch of the counter-intelligence group attached to the SE Division. On the other hand, Rome was considered an attractive place to live and a prime posting. He consulted the Russians.

Their attitude was approving. For one thing they had months of investigations, arrests and interrogations ahead of them. So vast was the harvest that Ames had brought them and, for security reasons, so small the Kolokol group working on that material in Moscow, that the full analysis could take years.

For in the interim Ames had provided much more. Among his secondary and tertiary deliveries to the Soviet diplomat Chuvakhin were background material on just about every case-officer of any note in Langley. There were not only full resumés of each of these officers, with their postings and achievements, but photos as well. Forewarned by this, the KGB would be able to spot these CIA officers whenever and wherever they showed up.

Also, the Russians estimated that in Rome, one of the key centres in the European Division, Ames would have access to all CIA operations and collaborations with its allies along the Mediterranean from Spain to Greece, an area of vital interest to Moscow.

Finally, they knew they could have much easier access to Ames in Rome than in Washington, where there was always the danger of the FBI spotting them meeting. They urged him to take the posting.

So that same September Ames went off to language school to learn Italian.

At Langley the full import of the catastrophe about to

hit them had not started to impinge. Two or three of their best agents in Russia had seemingly gone out of contact, which was worrying but not yet disastrous.

Among the personal dossiers Ames had passed to the KGB was that of one young man just transferred to the SE Division whom Ames referred to, because word had run like wildfire through the office, as a rising star. His name was Jason Monk.

Old Gennady had been picking mushrooms in those woods for years. In retirement he used nature's cost-free crop as a supplement to his pension, either taking them fresh to the best restaurants of Moscow or drying them in bunches for the few delicatessens that remained.

The thing about mushrooms is, you have to be out early in the morning, before dawn if possible. They grow in the night and after dawn the voles and squirrels get at them or, even worse, other mushroom-pickers. Russians love mushrooms.

On the morning of 24 July Gennady took his bicycle and his dog and rode from the small village where he lived to a forest he knew where they tended to grow thickly on summer nights. Before the dew was gone, he expected to have a good basketful.

The forest he chose was just off the great Minsk Highway where the trucks rolled and growled west towards the capital of Belarus. He rode into the forest, parked his bicycle by a tree he could find again, took his rush basket and set off.

It was after half an hour, with his basket half-full and the sun just rising, that his dog whined and headed into a clump of shrubs. He had trained the mutt to sniff out mushrooms, so clearly he had found something good.

As he neared the spot he caught the sweet sickly odour. He knew that smell. Had he not smelt it enough, years before as a teenage soldier all the way from the Vistula to Berlin?

The body had been dumped, or had crawled there and died. It was a scrawny old man, massively discoloured, eyes and mouth open. The birds had had the eyes. Three steel teeth glinted with dew. The body was stripped to the waist but an old overcoat was in a heap nearby. Gennady sniffed again. In that heat, it told him, several days.

He pondered for a while. He was of the generation that recalled civic duty, but mushrooms were still mushrooms, and there was nothing he could do for the fellow. A hundred yards away through the forest he could hear the rumble of the trucks on the road from Moscow to Minsk.

He finished filling his mushroom basket and pedalled back to his village. There he put his crop out to dry in the sun and reported to the small and ramshackle *selsoviet*, the local council office. It was not much, but it had a phone.

He dialled 02 and it was taken by the police central control office.

'I've found a body,' he said.

'Name?' said the voice.

'How the hell should I know? He's dead.'

'Not his, idiot, yours.'

'Do you want me to hang up?' said Gennady.

There was a sigh. 'No, don't hang up. Just give me your name and your location.'

Gennady did so. The control office quickly checked the place on the map. It was just inside the Moscow City Region (*Oblast*), in the extreme west, but still in Moscow's jurisdiction.

'Wait at the *selsoviet*. An officer will come out to see you.'

Gennady waited. It took half an hour. When he came he was a young inspector of uniformed branch. There were two other militiamen and they came in the usual yellow and blue Uzhgorod jeep-type vehicle.

'You the one who found the body?' asked the lieutenant.

'Yes,' said Gennady.

'All right, let's go. Where is it?'

'In the woods.'

Gennady felt quite important riding along in a police jeep. They dismounted where Gennady suggested and set off in single file through the trees. The mushroom-picker recognized the birch where he had left his bicycle, and his track from there on. Soon they smelt the odour.

'He's in there,' said Gennady, pointing to the clump.

'He doesn't half pong. Been there a while.'

The three policemen approached the body and examined it visually.

'See if there's anything in the trouser pockets,' said the officer to one of his men. To the other, 'Check out the greatcoat.'

The one who had drawn the short straw held his nose and ran his spare hand through both trouser pockets. Nothing. With his toe-cap he turned the body over. There were maggots underneath. He checked the rear trouser pockets and stood back. He shook his head. The other threw down the overcoat and did the same.

'Nothing? No ID at all?' asked the lieutenant.

'Nothing. No coins, handkerchief, keys, papers.'

'Hit and run?' suggested one of the policemen.

They listened to the rumble from the highway.

'How far to the road?' asked the officer.

'About a hundred metres,' said Gennady.

'Hit-and-run drivers carry on, fast. They don't lug the victim a hundred metres. Anyway, ten metres would do in all these trees.' To one of his men the lieutenant said:

'Walk up to the highway. Check the verge for a smashed-up bicycle or a wrecked car. He might have been in a pile-up and crawled here. Then stay there and flag down the ambulance.'

The officer used his mobile to call for an ~~investigating~~ photographer and medical expert. What he ~~was~~ could not be a 'natural causes'. He also asked for an ~~ambulance~~ but confirmed life was extinct. One of the ~~policemen~~

off through the trees for the road. The others waited, moving away from the stench.

The plain-clothes trio came first, in a plain buff Uzhgorod. They were waved down on the highway, parked on the verge and walked the rest. The investigator nodded at the lieutenant.

'What have we got?'

'He's over there. I called you because I can't see how it could be natural causes. Badly knocked about and a hundred metres from the road.'

'Who found him?'

'The mushroom-picker over there.'

The detective walked over to Gennady.

'Tell me. From the beginning.'

The photographer took pictures, then the doctor pulled on a gauze mask and made a quick examination. He straightened up and pulled off his rubber gloves.

'Ten copecks to a good bottle of Moskovskaya, it's a homicide. The lab will tell us more, but someone knocked the shit out of him before he died. Probably not here. Congratulations, Volodya, you just got your first *zhmurik* of the day.'

He used the Russian police and underworld slang for a 'stiff'. Two orderlies from the ambulance came through the wood with a stretcher. The doctor nodded and they zipped the corpse into a bodybag before taking it back to the road.

'Are you finished with me?' asked Gennady.

'No chance,' said the detective. 'I need a statement, at the station.'

The policemen took Gennady back to their precinct house, the headquarters of the western district, three miles down the road towards Moscow. The body went further, into the heart of the city, to the morgue of the Second Medical Institute. There it was put in a cold chest. Forensic pathologists were few and far between and their workload was overwhelming.

Jason Monk infiltrated South Yemen in mid-October. Though small and poor, the People's Republic had a first-class airport, formerly the military base of the Royal Air Force. Big jets could and did land there.

Monk's Spanish passport and supporting United Nations travel documents excited thorough but finally unsuspecting attention at Immigration and after half an hour, clutching his all-purpose grip, he was through.

Rome had indeed informed the head of the Food and Agriculture Organization programme that Señor Martinez Llorca was coming, but gave him a date which post-dated Monk's actual arrival by a week. The Yemeni officers at the airport did not know that. So there was no car to receive him. He took a taxi and checked in at the new French hotel, the Frontel, on the spit of land joining the rock of Aden to the mainland.

Even though his papers were good and he expected to run into no real Spaniards, he knew the mission was dangerous. It was black, very black.

The great majority of espionage is carried out by officers inside an embassy and technically posing as embassy staff. They thus benefit from diplomatic status if anything goes wrong.

Some are 'declared' officers, meaning they make no bones about what they do, and the local counter-intelligence people know and accept this, though the real job remains tactfully unmentioned. A big station in hostile territory will always try to maintain a few 'undeclared' officers whose cover jobs in Trade, Culture, Chancery or Press sections remain unblown. The reason is simple. Undeclared officers have a better chance of not being tailed out on the street, and therefore of being freer to service dead-letterboxes or attend covert meetings than those always being followed.

But a spy working outside diplomatic cover cannot benefit from the Vienna Accords. If a diplomat is exposed he can be declared *persona non grata* and

expelled. His country will then protest its innocence and expel one of the other nation's diplomats. The tit-for-tat dance having been gone through, the game resumes as before.

But a spy going in 'on the black' is an illegal. For him, depending on the nature of the place where he has been caught, exposure can mean terrible torture, a long spell in a labour camp or a lonely death. Even the people who sent him in can rarely help him.

In the democracies there will be a fair trial and a humane jail. In the dictatorships there are no civil rights. Some have never heard of them. South Yemen was like that, and the USA did not even have an embassy there in 1985.

In October the heat is still fierce and Friday is the day of rest when no work is done. What, thought Monk, will a fit Russian officer do on a blazing hot day off? Have a swim, was a reasonable idea.

For security's sake the original source who had had that dinner in New York with his FBI ex-classmate had not been recontacted. He might have given a better description of Major Solomin, even helped compose a portrait. He could even be back in Yemen, in a position to point the man out. But the assessment had been that he was also a blowhard and a braggart.

Finding the Russians was no problem. They were all over the place, and evidently allowed to mix pretty freely with the West European community, something that would have been unheard-of back home. Maybe it was the heat or the sheer impossibility of keeping the Soviet military advisory group pinned into their compounds day and night.

Two hotels, the Rock and the new Frontel, had inviting pools. Then there was the great sweep of sand with its foaming breakers, Abyan Beach, where the expatriates of all nationalities were wont to swim either after work or on their day off. Finally, there was a big Russian PX-style commissary up in the town where non-

Russians were allowed to shop – the USSR needed the foreign currency.

It was quickly clear that the Russians on display were almost all officers. Very few Russians speak a word of Arabic, and not many more have English. Those that have either language would have attended a special school, i.e. be officers or officer material. Private soldiers and NCOs would be unlikely to have either language and therefore could not communicate with the Yemenis. Thus, non-commissioned ranks would likely be confined to mechanics and cooks. Orderlies would be locally recruited Yemenis. Russian non-officers could not afford the prices of the Aden watering-holes. Officers had hard-currency allowance.

Another possibility was that the American from the UN had found the Russian drinking alone at the bar of the Rock. Russians like to drink, but they also prefer company, and the ones round the pool at the Frontel were definitely in an impenetrable group. Why did Solomin drink alone? Just a fluke that night? Or was he a solitary who preferred his own company?

There was a possible clue here. The American had said he was tall and muscular with black hair but almond-shaped eyes. Like an oriental, but without the flat nose. The language experts at Langley put the name somewhere in the Soviet Far East. Monk knew Russians are irretrievably racist, with an open contempt for *chorni*, the 'blacks', anyone not pure Russian. Perhaps Solomin was tired of jibes about his Asiatic cast of features.

Monk haunted the commissary – the Russian officers were all living as bachelors – the pools and the bars after dark. It was on the third day, strolling along Abyan Beach in boxer shorts with a towel over his shoulder, that he saw a man come out of the sea.

He was about six feet tall with heavily muscled arms and shoulders, not a youth, but a very fit fortyish. The hair was black as a raven's wing, but there was no body hair save beneath the armpits when he raised his hands to squeeze the water from his hair. Orientals have very

little body hair; black-haired Caucasians usually do.

The man strolled up the sand, found his towel and plonked himself down facing back to the sea. He pulled on a pair of dark glasses and was soon lost in thought.

Monk slipped off his shirt and walked down towards the sea like a bather coming for his first swim. The beach was reasonably crowded. It was natural enough to choose a vacant spot a yard from the Russian. He took his wallet and wrapped his shirt round it. Then his towel. He kicked off his sandals and made a mound of them all. Then he looked round in apprehension. Finally he glanced at the Russian.

'Please,' he said. The Russian glanced at him. 'You stay for a few more minutes?' The man nodded.

'The Arabs do not steal my things, OK?'

The Russian nodded again and went back to staring at the ocean. Monk ran down the beach and swam for ten minutes. When he came back, dripping, he smiled at the black-haired man.

'Thanks.' The man nodded for a third time. Monk towelled off and sat down.

'Nice sea. Nice beach. Pity about the people who own it.'

The Russian spoke for the first time, in English. 'What people?'

'The Arabs. The Yemenis. I haven't been here long, but already I can't stand them. Useless people.'

Behind the black glasses the Russian was looking at him but Monk could read no expression through the lenses. After two minutes he resumed.

'I mean, I'm trying to teach them to use basic tools and tractors. To increase their food, to feed themselves. No chance. Everything they break or smash up. I'm just wasting my time and the United Nations money.'

Monk was speaking good English but with a Spanish accent.

'You are English?' asked the Russian at last. It was his first contribution.

'No, Spanish. With the Food and Agriculture

programme, United Nations. And you? Also United Nations?’

The Russian grunted a negative. ‘From USSR,’ he said.

‘Ah, well, it will be hotter here than back home, for you. For me? About the same. And I can’t wait to get back home.’

‘Me, too,’ said the Russian. ‘I prefer the cold.’

‘You been here long?’

‘Two years. And one to go.’

Monk laughed. ‘Good God, we have to do one year, and I’ll never stay that long. It’s a job with no point. Well, I must be going. Tell me, after two years you must know, is there any good place to have a drink after dinner round here? Any nightclubs?’

The Russian laughed sardonically. ‘No. No *diskoteki*. The bar at the Rock Hotel is quiet.’

‘Thanks. Oh, by the way, I am Estéban. Estéban Martínez Llorca.’

He held out his hand. The Russian hesitated, then shook. ‘Pyotr,’ he said. ‘Or Peter. Peter Solomin.’

It was two nights later that the Russian major returned to the bar of the Rock Hotel. This former colonial hostelry is built literally into and on a rock, with steps up from the street to the small reception area and, on the top floor, a bar with panoramic views of the harbour. Monk had taken a window table and was staring out. He could see Solomin enter by the reflection in the plate glass, but he waited until the man had his drink before turning.

‘Ah, Peter, we meet again. Join me?’

He gestured to the other chair at his table. The Russian hesitated and then sat down. He lifted his beer.

‘*Za vashe zdorovye!*’

Monk did the same.

‘*Pesetas, faena y amor.*’ Solomin frowned. Monk grinned. ‘Money, work and love – in any order you like.’ The Russian smiled for the first time. It was a good smile.

Unlike the short, flat-featured Asiatics to the west and south, the Udegey are tall and hawk-faced. Many centuries before, some of their ancestors had moved north, crossed the Bering Straits into the Alaska of today and then turned south, spreading through Canada to become the Sioux and the Cheyenne.

Looking at the big Siberian soldier across the table, Monk could envisage the faces of long-dead buffalo hunters of the Platte and Powder Rivers.

For the young Solomin it was the factory or the army. He took the train north and enlisted at Khabarovsk. All youths had to do three years' military service anyway and after two the best were picked for sergeant rank. With his skills out on manoeuvre, he was then chosen for officer school, and after two further years was commissioned as a lieutenant.

He served for seven years as lieutenant and senior lieutenant before making major at the age of thirty-three. In that time he married and had two children. He made his way without patronage or influence, surviving the racist taunts of *churka*, a Russian insult meaning 'log' or 'thick as a plank'. Several times he had used his fists to settle the argument.

The assignment to Yemen in 1983 had been his first foreign posting. He knew most of his colleagues enjoyed it. Despite the harsh conditions of the land, with its heat, blistering rocks and lack of entertainment, they had spacious accommodation, very different from the USSR, being mostly quartered in the old British barracks. There was plenty of food, with lamb and fish barbecues on the beach. They could swim and, using catalogues, order clothes, videos and music tapes from Europe.

All of this, especially the sudden exposure to the new delights of Western consumer culture, Pyotr Solomin appreciated. But there was something that made him bitter and disillusioned with the regime he served. Monk could smell it, but feared to push too hard.

For the Russian, to be where he was at all, he had to

own sake. But to sit on your thumbs. To watch, hate and do nothing. Is that not also crazy?’

The Russian rose, his beer undrunk. ‘I must think,’ he said.

‘Tomorrow night,’ said Monk, still in Russian. ‘Here. You come alone, we talk. You come with guards, I am dead. You do not come, I leave on the next plane.’

Major Solomin stalked out.

All standard operating procedures, SOPs, would have told Monk to get out of the Yemen and fast. He had not had a total rebuff, but he had not made a score either. A man with his mind in turmoil can change that mind, and the cellars of the Yemeni secret police are fearsome places.

Monk waited twenty-four hours. The major returned . . . alone. It took two days more. Concealed in his toiletries Monk had brought the basics for a communications package: the secret inks, the safe addresses, the harmless phrases that contained their hidden meanings. There was not much Solomin could divulge out of the Yemen, but in a year he would be back in Moscow. If he still wished, he could communicate.

When they parted, their handshake lasted several seconds.

‘Good luck, my friend,’ said Monk.

‘Good hunting, as we say back home,’ replied the Siberian.

Lest they be seen leaving the Rock together, Monk sat on. His new recruit would need a code-name. Far above, the stars glittered with that amazing brightness only seen in the tropics.

Among them Monk picked out the belt of the Great Hunter. Agent GT Orion was born.

On 2 August Boris Kuznetsov received a personal letter from the British journalist Mark Jefferson. It was on the letterhead of the *Daily Telegraph* in London, and although faxed to the newspaper’s Moscow bureau, it

had been hand-delivered at the headquarters of the UPF party.

Jefferson made plain his personal admiration of the stance taken by Igor Komarov against chaos, corruption and crime, and his own study of the party leader's speeches over recent months.

With the recent death of the Russian president, he went on, the whole question of the future of the world's largest country was once again a matter of focal interest. He personally wished to visit Moscow in the first half of August. For the sake of tact, he would no doubt have to interview the candidates for the future presidency of the Left and the Centre. This, however, would only be a matter of form.

Clearly the outer world's only real interest would be in the foregone victor of that contest, Igor Komarov. He, Jefferson, would be deeply grateful if Kuznetsov could see his way clear to recommending that Mr Komarov receive him. He could promise a major, centre-page spread in the *Daily Telegraph*, with certain syndication across Europe and North America.

Although Kuznetsov, whose father had been a diplomat with the United Nations for years and had used his position to see his son graduate at Cornell, knew the USA better than Europe, he certainly knew London.

He also knew that the American press tended to the liberal tendency and had been mainly hostile to his employer on the occasions when interviews had been granted. The last had been a year ago, and the questioning had been hostile. Komarov had forbidden further exposures to the American press.

But London was different. Several major newspapers and two national magazines were firmly Conservative, though nothing like as far to the Right as Igor Komarov in his public pronouncements.

I would recommend that an exception be made for Mark Jefferson, Mr President,' he told Igor Komarov, their weekly meeting the next day.

'Who is this man?' asked Komarov, who

journalists, Russian included. They asked questions he saw no reason to answer.

'I have prepared a file on him here, Mr President,' said Kuznetsov, handing over a slim folder. 'As you will see, he supports the restoration of capital punishment for murder in his own country. Also vigorous opposition to Britain's membership of the collapsing European Union. A staunch Conservative. The last time he mentioned yourself, it was to say you were the sort of Russian leader London should support and do business with.'

Komarov grunted, and then agreed. His reply went to the *Telegraph's* Moscow office by despatch rider the same day. It said Mr Jefferson should be in Moscow for the interview on 9 August.

YEMEN, JANUARY 1986

Neither Solomin nor Monk could have predicted that the major's tour in Aden would end nine months prematurely. But on 13 January a violent civil war broke out between two rival factions within the Yemeni governing caucus. So fierce was the fighting that the decision was made to evacuate all foreign nationals, Russians included. This took place over six days, starting on 15 January. Pyotr Solomin was among those who took to the boats.

The airport was being raked with fire, so the sea was the only way out. By a fluke the British royal yacht *Britannia* had just emerged from the southern end of the Red Sea, heading for Australia to prepare for Queen Elizabeth to tour.

On a message from the British embassy in Aden, the Admiralty in London was alerted and consulted the Queen's private secretary. He checked with the monarch and Queen Elizabeth ordered that the *Britannia* should do all it could to help.

Two days later Major Solomin, with a group of other Russian officers, made a dash from cover to the sea at

Abyan Beach where the gigs from *Britannia* were rolling in the surf. British sailors hauled them out of the waist-deep water, and within an hour the bemused Russians were spreading their borrowed bedrolls along the cleared floor of the Queen's private sitting-room.

On her first mission *Britannia* filled up with 431 refugees, and on subsequent runs to the beach finally pulled 1,068 people from fifty-five nations off the sand. Between evacuations, she ran across the Djibouti on the Horn of Africa to discharge her human cargo in shifts. Solomin and his fellow Russians were flown home via Damascus to Moscow.

What no-one knew then was that if Solomin still entertained any doubts about what he was going to do, the balance was tipped by the contrast between the easy camaraderie of the British, French and Italians with the Royal Navy sailors and the bleak paranoia of the debriefings in Moscow.

All the CIA knew was that a man they thought one of their own had recruited three months earlier had disappeared back into the all-consuming maw of the USSR. Either he would communicate or he would not.

Throughout that winter the Soviet Division's operational arm literally disintegrated piece by piece. One by one the Russian 'assets' working for the CIA on foreign station were quietly recalled on a variety of plausible excuses: your mother is ill, your son is doing badly at college and needs his father, there is a promotions board being convened. One by one they fell for the ruse and returned to the USSR. On arrival they were at once arrested and taken to Colonel Grishin's new base, an entire wing partitioned off from the rest of the grim fortress of Lefortovo jail. Langley knew nothing of the arrests, simply that the men were disappearing one by one.

As for those stationed inside the USSR, they simply ceased to give routine 'signs of life'.

Inside the USSR there was no question of giving a man a call at the office to say: let's take a coffee. All

phones were tapped, all diplomats tailed. Foreigners, by their dress alone, stood out a mile. Contacts had to be extremely delicate and usually rare.

When made, they were generally by dead-letter box or 'drop'. This very basic ruse sounds crude but still works. Aldrich Ames used 'drops' right up to the end. The drop is simply a small receptacle or hiding-place somewhere—a hollow drainpipe, a culvert, a hole in a tree.

The agent can put a letter or consignment of micro-film in the drop, then alert his employers that he has done so by a chalk mark on a wall or lamp-post. The position of the mark means: drop so-and-so has something in it for you. An embassy car, cruising by, even with native counter-intelligence coming up behind, can spot the chalk mark through the windows and drive on.

Later, an undeclared officer will try to slip his surveillance and recover the package, possibly leaving money in its place. Or further instructions. Then *he* will make a chalk mark somewhere. The 'asset' driving by will spot it and know his delivery has been received, but something awaits him. By dead of night, he will recover the consignment.

In this manner spy can stay in touch with spymaster for months, even years, without a face-to-face 'meet'.

If the spy is way outside the capital where the diplomats cannot go, or even in the city but has nothing to deposit, the rule is that he will give a 'sign of life' at regular intervals. In the capital, where the diplomats can cruise by, these may be more chalk marks which, by their shape and location mean: I'm fine but I have nothing for you. Or: I am worried, I think I am under surveillance.

Where distance prevents these secret messages, and the provinces in the USSR were always out of bounds to US diplomats, small ads in the main newspapers are a favourite for a sign of life. 'Boris has charming abrador puppy for sale. Ring . . .' might innocently appear among all the others. Inside the embassy, the

controlling agents scan them. The wording is all. Labrador might mean 'I'm fine', while spaniel could mean 'I'm in trouble'. 'Charming' might say 'I'll be in Moscow next week and will service the usual drop.' 'Delightful' could mean 'I can't make Moscow for at least another month.'

The point is, the sign-of-life messages must happen. When they stop, there could be a problem. Maybe a heart attack or a highway crash and the asset is in hospital. When they *all* stop, there is a major problem.

That was what happened through the fall and winter of 1985 into 1986. They all stopped. Gordievsky made his desperate 'I'm in deep trouble' call and was pulled out by the British. Major Bokhan in Athens smelled a rat and made a run for safety in the USA. The other twelve just vaporized.

Each individual control officer at Langley or abroad would know about his own missing asset and would report back. But Carey Jordan and the head of SE Division had the overview. They knew there was something badly wrong.

Ironically it was the very weirdness of what the KGB was doing that saved Ames. No-one would dream, the CIA calculated, of carrying out such a blitz of agents so quickly if the betrayer were still in the heart of Langley. Thus they were able to convince themselves of what they wanted to believe anyway: they, the *élite of the élite*, could not be entertaining a traitor in their midst. Nevertheless, a frantic search had to be made, and it was - but elsewhere.

First suspect was Edward Lee Howard, the lynchpin of an earlier fiasco, by then safely tucked away in Moscow. Howard had been a CIA man working in SE Division and being briefed to take a posting to the Moscow embassy. He was even told operational details. Just before his posting it was discovered his finances were crooked and he took drugs.

Forgetting the golden rule of Machiavelli, the *CU* fired him but left him running around. For two year

were stored. The findings were horrific. In all, 198 people had access. It was a terrifying figure. If you are deep inside the USSR with your life on the line, the last thing you need is for 198 complete strangers to have access to your file.

CHAPTER SIX

Professor Kuzmin scrubbed up in the examination room of the mortuary below the Second Medical Institute, facing with little pleasure his third post-mortem of the day.

'Who's next?' he called to his assistant as he dried off with an inadequate paper towel.

'Number 158,' said his helper.

'Details.'

'White Caucasian male, late middle age. Cause of death unknown, identity unknown.'

Kuzmin groaned. Why do I bother? he asked himself. Another tramp, another hobo, another dosser whose bits, when he had finished, would perhaps assist the medical students in the academy three floors up to understand what protracted abuse could do to human organs, whose skeleton might even end up in an anatomy class.

Moscow, like any major city, produced its nightly, weekly and monthly harvest of cadavers, but fortunately only a minority required a post-mortem or the professor and all his colleagues in forensic pathology would have ceased to cope.

The majority in the city are the 'natural causes', all those who died at home or in hospital of old age or any one of a hundred terminal and predicted causes. The infirmaries and the local doctors could sign the certificates for those.

Then came the 'natural causes, unforeseen', usually fatal heart attacks, and again the hospitals to which the unfortunates were taken could cope with the basic, and usually very basic, bureaucratic formalities.

After them came the accidents, domestic, industrial and automobile. Moscow had two more categories that had grown massively over the years: freezing to death (in

winter) and suicides. The numbers ran into thousands.

Bodies recovered from the river, identified or not, went into three categories. Fully clothed, no alcohol in the system, suicide; clothed, hugely drunk, accident; swim shorts, accidentally drowned while swimming.

Then came the homicides. These went to the police, detective branch, and they turned to Professor Kuzmin. Even these were usually a formality. The great majority, as in all cities, were the 'domestics'. Eighty per cent happened inside the home or the perpetrator was a family member. The police usually had them within hours, and the post-mortem simply confirmed what was already known – Ivan had stabbed his wife – and helped the courts bring in a quick verdict.

After these came the bar brawls and gangland killings; in the latter case he knew the police conviction rate was a miserable 3 per cent. Cause of death, however, was no problem; a bullet in the brain is a bullet in the brain. Whether the investigators ever found the hitman (probably not) was not the professor's problem.

In all the above, thousands and thousands a year, one thing was certain. The authorities knew who the dead man was. Occasionally they had a John Doe. Cadaver 158 was a John Doe. Professor Kuzmin drew on his gauze mask, flexed his fingers inside the rubber gloves and approached with a flicker of interest as his assistant drew back the sheet.

Ah, he thought, odd. Even interesting. The stench that would have caused a layman to gag at once left him unmoved. He was used to it. Scalpel in hand he circled the long table, staring at the damaged corpse. Very odd.

The head seemed intact apart from the empty eye-sockets, but he could see that was the work of birds. The man had been unbound in the woods near the Minsk Highway for about six days. Below the pelvis the legs seemed discoloured, as with age and putrefaction, but undamaged. Between thorax and genitals there was hardly a square inch not black with massive bruising.

Putting down the scalpel, he turned the body over.

Same at the back. Rolling the corpse back again, he took his scalpel and began to cut, giving his running commentary into the turning tape-recorder. Later this tape would enable him to write up his report for the goons in Homicide down at Petrovka. He began with the date: 2 August 1999.

WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 1986

In the middle of the month, to the joy of Jason Monk and the considerable surprise of his superiors in SE Division, Major Pyotr Solomin made contact. He wrote a letter.

Wisely, he did not even attempt to contact any Westerner in Moscow and certainly not the American embassy. He wrote to the address Monk had given him in East Berlin.

The giving of the address at all was a risk but a calculated one. If Solomin had gone to the KGB to betray the safe house, he would have had some impossible questions to answer. The interrogators would have known he would never have been given such an address unless he had agreed to work for the CIA, that would have been worse.

Why, he would have been asked, did you not report the approach immediately, on first contact, to the commanding colonel of the GRU in Aden, and why did you allow the American who contacted you to escape? Those questions were unanswerable.

So Solomin was either going to keep mum about the whole thing, or he was 'on the team'. The letter indicated the latter.

In the USSR all mail coming in from or heading out to 'abroad' was intercepted and read. Ditto all phone calls, cables, faxes and telexes. But internal Soviet mail, by its sheer volume, could not be unless sender or recipient were under suspicion. The same applied to mail within the Soviet bloc, and that included East Germany.

The East Berlin address belonged to a subway driver

who worked as a postman for the CIA and was well paid for it. Letters arriving at his apartment in a run-down block in Friedrichshain district were always addressed to Franz Weber.

Weber had genuinely been the previous tenant of the flat and was conveniently dead. If the subway driver had ever been challenged, he could plausibly have sworn that there had been two letters already; he could not understand a word of Russian; they were addressed to Weber; Weber was dead so he had thrown them away. An innocent man.

The letters never had a return address or surname. The text was banal and boring: hope this finds you well; things here are fine; how are your studies in Russia coming along? I hope we shall renew our acquaintance one day. All best wishes, your penpal Ivan.

Even the East German secret police, the Stasis, could only have deduced from the text that Weber had met a Russian on some kind of exchange culture Fest and they had become penpals. This sort of thing was encouraged anyway.

Even if the Stasis had deciphered the hidden message in invisible ink between the lines, it would only have indicated that Weber, deceased, had been a rat who had got away with it.

At the Moscow end, once the missive had been dropped in a mailbox, the sender became untraceable.

Once he had received a letter from Russia, the subway driver, Heinrich, sent it over the Wall into the West. How he did it sounds weird, but much stranger things happened in the divided city of Berlin during the Cold War. In fact, his method was so simple that he was never caught. The Cold War ended, Germany was reunited and Heinrich retired to a very comfortable old age.

Before Berlin was divided by the Wall in 1961 to prevent the East Germans escaping, it shared an all-city subway system. After the Wall, this was divided. Many tunnels between East and West were blocked off. But there was one stretch where the East German section of

the system became an elevated rail and rattled across a stretch of West Berlin.

For this transit from East across a bit of the West and back into the East, all windows and doors were sealed. East Berlin passengers could sit and look down on a piece of West Berlin, but they could not get there.

Up in the cab, all alone, Heinrich would ease down his window and at a certain point, using a catapult, shoot a projectile like a small golf ball out into a derelict bomb site. Knowing Heinrich's work roster, a middle-aged man would be walking his dog there. When the train had rattled out of sight, he would pick up the golf ball and bring it to his colleagues at the CIA's enormous West Berlin station. Unscrewed, the ball revealed the tightly furled onion-skin letter inside.

Solomin had news, and it was all good. After repatriation there had been intensive debriefing and then a week's leave. He had reported back to the Ministry of Defence for reassignment.

In the lobby he had been spotted by the Deputy Defence Minister for whom he had built the dacha three years earlier. The man had been made up to First Deputy Minister.

Although he wore the uniform of the colonel-general, with enough medals to sink a gunboat, the man was really a creature of the apparat who had come up the political ladder. It pleased him to have a rugged combat soldier from Siberia in his entourage. He was delighted with his dacha, completed under schedule, and his aide-de-camp had just retired on health (consumption of vodka) grounds. He raised Solomin to lieutenant-colonel and gave him the post.

Finally Solomin, at considerable risk, gave his own residential address in Moscow and asked for instructions. Had the KGB intercepted and deciphered the letter he would have been done for. But as he could not approach the US embassy, Langley had to be told how to approach him. He should have been supplied with a much more sophisticated communications package

before leaving the Yemen, but the civil war intervened.

Ten days later he got a traffic violation 'final notice' demand. The envelope bore the logo of the Central Traffic Office. It was posted in Moscow. No-one intercepted it. The demand and the envelope were so well forged that he nearly rang the Traffic Office to protest he had never gone through a red light. Then he saw the sand trickling out of the envelope.

He kissed his wife as she left to take the children to school, and when he was alone he painted the demand notice with the enhancer from the small flask he had smuggled back from Aden in his shaving-kit. The message was simple. The following Sunday. Mid-morning. A café on Leninsky Prospekt.

He was on his second coffee when an anonymous figure passed by, struggling himself into his overcoat against the chill blast outside. From the empty sleeve a single pack of Russian cigarettes dropped onto his table. He covered it with his newspaper. The overcoat left the café without looking back.

The pack appeared full of cigarettes, but the twenty filters were a block, glued together and with nothing smokable beneath them. In the cavity was a tiny camera, ten rolls of film to be getting on with, a sheet of rice-paper describing three dead-letter boxes with directions how to find them, and six types of chalk mark, with their locations, to indicate when the drops were empty or needed servicing. Also a warm personal letter from Monk beginning, 'So, my hunter friend, we are going to change the world . . . !'

A month later Orion made his first delivery and picked up more rolls of film. His information came from the deepest heart of the Soviet arms-industrial complex, and it was priceless.

Professor Kuzmin checked over the transcript of his notes on the post-mortem of Cadaver 158 and made a few annotations in his own hand. He was not even going

to ask his overworked secretary to do a retype; let the muttonheads down at Homicide work it out for themselves.

He had no doubt that Homicide was where the file would have to go. He tried to be merciful to the detectives, and where there was some doubt he would sign off the deceased as an 'accidental' or 'natural causes' if he could. Then the relatives could collect and do what they wished or, in the event of an unidentified body it would remain in the morgue for the statutory time required by law. He would alert 'missing persons' and if they could not come up with an ID, the body would eventually go to a paupers' grave, courtesy of the Mayor of Moscow, or to the anatomy classes.

But 158 was a homicide, and no way of getting round it. Short of a pedestrian being hit by a truck at full gallop, he had seldom seen such internal damage. One single blow, even by a truck, could not have achieved it all. He supposed being trampled on by a herd of buffalo might produce the same effect, but there were few buffalo in Moscow and in any case they would stamp on head and legs as well. Cadaver 158 had been beaten many times by blunt objects between the neck and hips, both sides.

When he had finished his notes he signed and dated them, 3 August, at the bottom and put them in his 'out' tray.

'Homicide?' asked his secretary brightly.

'Homicide, John Doe desk,' he confirmed. She typed out the buff envelope, slotted the file inside, and placed the package beside her. On her way out that evening she would give it to the porter who lived in a cubby-hole on the ground floor, and he would in due course and time give it to the van driver who took the files to their various destinations around Moscow.

In the meantime Cadaver 158 lay in the icy darkness minus his eyes and most of his innards.

LANGLEY, MARCH 1986

Carey Jordan stood at his window and stared out at his favourite view. It was late in the month and the first faint haze of green was coming upon the forest between the CIA main building and the Potomac River. Soon the glint of water, always visible through the leafless woods in winter, would disappear. He loved Washington; it had more woods, trees, parks and gardens than any city he knew in the States, and spring was his favourite season.

At least, it had been. Spring 1986 was proving a nightmare. Sergei Bokhan, the GRU officer the CIA had been running in Athens, had made clear during his repeated debriefings in America that he believed if he had flown back to Moscow he would have faced a firing-squad. He could not prove it, but the excuse his superior officer had given for his recall, his son's bad grades at military academy, were simply a lie. Therefore, he had been 'blown'. He had not made any mistakes himself, so he believed he had been betrayed.

As Bokhan had been among the first three to experience problems, the CIA had been sceptical. Now they were not so unbelieving. Five others around the world had been mysteriously recalled in mid-posting and had vaporized into thin air.

That made six. With the Brits' man Gordievsky, seven. Five more, based inside the USSR, had also vanished. There was not a single major source, representing years of hard work, patience and cunning, and a massive investment of tax dollars, now left functioning. Bar two.

Behind him Harry Gaunt, head of the SE Division, which was the principal, nay at the moment the only, victim of the virus, sat plunged in thought. Gaunt was the same age as the DDO and they had come up through the ranks together, weathering years in foreign outstations, recruiting their sources, playing the Great

e against the KGB enemy, and they trusted each other like brothers.

That was the trouble; inside the SE Division they all trusted each other. They had to. They were the inner core, the most exclusive club, the cutting edge of the covert war. Yet each man harboured a terrible suspicion. Howard, code-breaks, clever detective work by the KGB's Line KR might account for five, six, even seven blown-away agents. But fourteen? The whole goddamn lot? And yet there could not be a traitor. There *must* not be. Not in the Soviet/Eastern Europe Division. There was a knock on the door. The mood lightened. The last remaining success story was waiting to come in.

'Sit down, Jason,' said the DDO. 'Harry and I just wanted a word to say "Well done". Your man Orion has come up with real pay-dirt. The guys in Analysis are having a field day. So we reckon the agent who brought him in is worth a GS-15 tag.'

Promotion, from GS-14 to 15. He thanked them.

'How is your man Lysander in Madrid?'
'He's fine, sir. He's reporting regularly. Not cosmic stuff, but useful. His tour's nearly up. He'll be going back to Moscow soon.'

'He hasn't been recalled prematurely?'
'No, sir. Should he?'

'No reason at all, Jason.'
'Could I say something, speak frankly?'
'Fire away.'

'There's word out in the division that we've been having a rough time these past six months.'
'Really?' said Gaunt. 'Well, people will gossip. Up to that point the full import of the disarray had been confined to the top ten men at the peak of the agency hierarchy. But though Ops had 6,000 employees and a thousand of them in the SE Division, word spread like wildfire at Monk's level, it was still a village where the word spreads. Monk took a breath and went on.'

'The talk is that we have been losing agents. I even heard a figure of up to ten.'

'You know the need-to-know rules, Jason.'

'Yes, sir.'

'All right, maybe we have had a few problems. It happens in all agencies. Runs of good luck and runs of bad. What's your point?'

'Even if the figure was anything like ten, there is only one place all such information is gathered together in one place. The 301 files.'

'I think we know how the agency is run, soldier,' growled Gaunt.

'So how come Lysander and Orion are still running free?' asked Monk.

'Look, Jason,' said the DDO patiently. 'I told you once you were weird. Meaning unconventional, a rule-breaker. But that you were lucky. OK, we have had some losses, but don't forget your two assets were in the 301 files as well.'

'No, they weren't.'

An observer could have heard a peanut drop on the pile carpet. Harry Gaunt stopped fiddling with his pipe, which he never smoked indoors but used like an actor's prop.

'I just never got around to filing their details with Central Registry. It was an oversight. I'm sorry.'

'Just where are the original reports? Your own reports, covering recruitment details, places, times of meetings?' asked Gaunt at last.

'In my safe. They've never left.'

'And all on-going operation procedures?'

'In my head.'

There was another even longer pause.

'Thank you, Jason,' said the DDO at last. 'We'll be in touch.'

A fortnight later there was a major strategy campaign at the pinnacle of the operations directorate. Carey Jordan, working with only two fellow analysts, had whittled the 198 who theoretically had had access over

the previous twelve months to the 301 files down to forty-one. Aldrich Ames, by then still on his Italian course, was on the smaller list.

Jordan, with Gaunt, Gus Hathaway and two others, argued that, to make sure, the forty-one should be subjected, however painful it might be, to serious investigation. That would mean a 'hostile' polygraph test and a check of private finances.

The polygraph was an American invention and great store was set by it. Only research in the late eighties and early nineties revealed how flawed it could be. For one thing, an experienced liar can beat it, and espionage is based on deception, hopefully only of the enemy.

For another, the questioners need to be superbly briefed to ask the right questions. They cannot be so briefed unless the subject has been checked out. To sort out the liar, they need to cause the guilty party to think, 'Oh, my God, they know, they know', and set the pulses racing. If the liar can discern from the questions that they know nothing, he will calm down and stay calm. This is the difference between a friendly and a hostile polygraph test. The friendly version is a waste of paper, if the subject is a skilled and prepared dissembler.

Key to the inquiry the DDO wanted would be a check on finances. Had they but known it, Aldrich Ames, broke and desperate after a messy divorce and remarriage twelve months earlier, was by then awash with cash, all deposited since April 1985.

Leading the group that opposed the DDO was Ken Mulgrew. He evoked the frightening damage that James Angleton had achieved with his constant checking on loyal officers, pointing out that to check out private finances was a massive invasion of privacy and an assault on civil rights.

Gaunt countered that never in Angleton's day had there been a sudden loss of a dozen agents in a brief six months. His own investigations had been based on paranoia; the agency in 1986 was gazing at solid evidence that something had gone badly wrong.

The hawks lost. Civil rights won the day. The 'hard' check on the forty-one was vetoed.

Inspector Pavel Volsky sighed as another file thumped onto his desk.

A year earlier he had been perfectly happy as a top sergeant in Organized Crime. At least there they had got a chance to raid the warehouses of the underworld and confiscate their ill-gotten gains. A smart sergeant could live well when confiscated luxuries suffered a slight skim-off before being handed over to the State.

But no, his wife had wanted to be the lady of a detective-inspector, so when the chance occurred he took the course, the promotion and the transfer to Homicide.

He could not foresee that they would give him the John Doe desk. When he gazed at the tide of 'who-knows-who-cares' files that drifted across his vision, he often wished he was back at Shabolovka Street.

At least most John Does had a motive attached. Robbery, of course. With the wallet gone, the victim had lost his money, credit cards, family snaps and the all-important *passport*, the internal Russian ID document, with picture, that carried all the necessary details. Oh, and his life, or he would not be on a slab in a morgue.

In the case of an upstanding citizen with a wallet worth taking there would usually be family. They would complain to Missing Persons, who ran a weekly gallery of family photos over to him and often a match could be made. Then the weeping family could be told where to identify and collect their missing member.

In a case where robbery was not the motive, the body would usually still have the *passport* somewhere about the pockets, so the file would never come to Volsky anyway. Nor would the files of all the derelicts who threw their ID away because it revealed where they came from; they did not want the militia to shunt them back there, but they still died of cold or alcohol on the streets. Volsky

only dealt with certain homicides, by a person unknown of a person unknown. It was, he mused, an exclusive but pretty futile occupation.

The file that landed in front of him on 4 August was different. Robbery could hardly be the motive. A glance at the Scene of Discovery report from the western division told him the cadaver had been discovered by a mushroom-picker in the woods off the Minsk Highway just inside the city limits. A hundred metres off the highway – discount hit-and-run.

The personal effects list was gloomy. Victim was wearing (from the bottom up): shoes, plastic, cheap, cracked, down-at-heel; socks, cheap, store-bought, ingrained with grime; undershorts, ditto; trousers, thin, black, greasy; belt, plastic, worn. That was it. No shirt, tie or jacket. Just a greatcoat found nearby, described as ex-army, fifties vintage, very threadbare.

There was a brief paragraph at the bottom. Contents of pockets nil, repeat nil. No watch, ring or any item of personal possession.

Volsky glanced at the photo taken at the scene. Someone had kindly closed the eyes. A thin, unshaven face, mid-sixties perhaps, looking a decade older. Haggard, that was the word, and that would be before he died.

Poor old sod, thought Volsky, I'll bet no-one topped *you* for your Swiss bank account. He turned to the post-mortem report. After several paragraphs he stubbed out his cigarette and swore.

'Why can't these boffins write in simple Russian?' he asked the wall, not for the first time. It was all talk of lacerations and contusions; if you mean cuts and bruises, say so, he thought.

A number of aspects puzzled him, when he had worked his way through the jargon. He checked the official stamp of the mortuary at Second Medical and rang the number. He was lucky. Professor Kuzmin was at his desk.

'Is that Professor Kuzmin?' he asked.

'It is. Who speaks?'

'Inspector Volsky. Homicide. I have your report in front of me.'

'Lucky you.'

'May I be frank with you, Professor?'

'In our day and age it would be a privilege.'

'It's just that some of the language is a bit complex. You mention severe bruising on each upper arm. Can you say what caused that?'

'As a pathologist, no, it's just severe contusion. But between us, those marks were made by human fingers.'

'Someone grabbed him?'

'Meaning he was held up, my dear Inspector. Held up, supported, by two strong men while he was being beaten.'

'This was all done by humans then? No machinery involved?'

'If his head and legs were in the same condition, I'd say he'd been dropped from a helicopter onto concrete. And not a low-flying helicopter. But no, any form of impact with the ground or a truck would have damaged the head and legs as well. No, he was struck repeatedly between the neck and the hips, front and back, with hard blunt objects.'

'Cause of death . . . asphyxia?'

'That's what I said, Inspector.'

'Forgive me, he was beaten to pulp but died of asphyxia?'

Kuzmin sighed. 'All his ribs were broken, ~~but one~~. Some in several places. Two were driven back into his lungs. Pulmonary blood then entered the ~~trachea~~, causing asphyxiation.'

'You mean he choked on the blood in his ~~throat~~?''

'That's what I have been trying to tell you.'

'I'm sorry, I'm new here.'

'And I'm hungry here,' said the professor. 'It is lunch hour. Good-day to you, Inspector.'

Volsky rechecked the report. So the old boy had been beaten. It all said 'gangland'. But ~~gangland was usually~~

younger than that. He must really have offended someone in the mafia. If he hadn't died of asphyxia, he would have croaked from the trauma.

So what did they want, the killers? Information? Surely he'd have given them what they wanted without all this? Punishment? Example? Sadism? A bit of all three perhaps. But what on earth could an old man who looked like a tramp have in his possession that a gang boss would want so badly, or what could he have done to a gang boss to deserve what he got?

Volsky noticed one more thing under 'Identifying marks'. The professor has written: None upon the body, but in the mouth two frontal incisors and one canine, all of stainless steel, apparently the inheritance of some crude military dentistry. Meaning the man had three steel teeth at the front.

The forensic pathologist's last remark reminded Volsky of something. It *was* the lunch-break and he had agreed to meet a mate, also in Homicide. He got up, locked his shabby office behind him and left.

LANGLEY, JULY 1986

The letter from Colonel Solomin caused quite a problem. He had made three deliveries by dead-letter box in Moscow but now wanted a re-meet with his controller, Jason Monk. As he had no opportunity to leave the USSR, it would have to be on Soviet territory.

The first reaction of any agency receiving such a suggestion would be to suspect their man had been caught and was writing under duress.

But Monk was convinced Solomin was neither a fool nor a coward. There was a single word which, if he were writing under duress, he should avoid using at all costs, and another he should try to insert into the message. Even under duress he would probably be able to comply with one or other condition. His letter from Moscow contained the word that should be there and did not

contain the one that should not. In other words, it seemed to be genuine.

Harry Gaunt had long agreed with Monk that Moscow, infested with KGB agents and watchers, was too risky. With a short-term diplomatic posting the Soviet Foreign Ministry would still want full details, which they would pass on to the Second Chief Directorate. Even disguised, Monk would be under surveillance throughout his stay, and meeting the aide-de-camp of the Deputy Defence Minister in safety would be just about impossible. In any case, Solomin did not propose that.

He said he had leave due in late September and had been awarded a prize – a vacation apartment in the Black Sea resort of Gurzuf.

Monk checked it out. A small village on the coast of the Crimean peninsula, a renowned resort for the military and home to a major Defence Ministry hospital, where injured or recuperating officers could convalesce in the sun.

Two former Soviet officers residing in the USA were consulted. Both agreed they had not been there but knew of Gurzuf: a beautiful former fishing village where Chekhov had lived and died in his villa by the sea, fifty minutes by bus or twenty-five by taxi up the coast from Yalta.

Monk switched his research to Yalta. The USSR was still virtually a sealed country in many respects, and to fly into the area on a scheduled route was out of the question. The air route would be to Moscow, change for Kiev, change again for Odessa and then to Yalta. There was no way a foreign tourist was going to make that route, and there was no particular reason why a foreign tourist would want to head for Yalta. It might be a Soviet resort, but a single foreigner would stand out like a sore thumb. He looked at the sea routes and got a break.

Ever hungry for foreign hard currency, the Soviet Government allowed the Black Sea Shipping Company to run sea cruises of the Mediterranean. Although all the

were Soviet, with a sprinkling of KGB agents among them (that went without saying), the passengers mainly from the West. Because of the cheapness of such cruises for westerners, the passenger groups tended to be students, academics, senior citizens. There were three liners doing these cruises in the summer of 1986: the *Litva*, the *Latvia* and the *Armenia*. The one that fitted September was the *Armenia*.

According to the London agent for the Black Sea Shipping Company, she would leave Odessa for the Greek port of Piraeus, mainly empty. From Greece she would head due west for Barcelona in Spain, then turn back via Marseilles, Naples, Malta, Istanbul before heading into the Black Sea for Varna on the coast of Bulgaria, then Yalta and finally back to Odessa. The bulk of her Western passengers would join at Barcelona, Marseilles or Naples.

At the end of July, with the co-operation of the British Security Service, a very skilful break-in was effected at the offices of the London-based agency of the shipping company. No trace of entry or exit was ever left. The bookings for the *Armenia* that had been made in London were photographed.

A study of these revealed a block booking for members of the American-Soviet Friendship Society. Back in the States they were checked out. All appeared to be middle-aged, sincere, naive and dedicated to improvement of American-Soviet relations. They lived in or near the north-east of the USA.

In early August Professor Norman Kelson of Antonio, Texas, joined the society and applied for literature. From this he 'learned' of the forthcoming expedition on the *Armenia*, boarding at Marseilles. He applied to join as the seventh member of the group. The Soviet organization Intourist saw no objection to the extra booking was made.

The real Norman Kelson was a former CIA man who had retired to San Antonio and bore

resemblance to Jason Monk, although fifteen years older, a difference that would be made up with grey hair-tint and smoked eye-glasses.

In mid-August Monk replied to Solomin that his friend would wait for him at the turnstile to the Yalta botanical gardens. The gardens are a famous landmark of Yalta, situated out of town, one-third of the way up the coast to Gurzuf. The friend would be there at noon on 27 and 28 September.

Inspector Volsky was late for his lunch date so he strode rapidly through the corridors of the big grey edifice on Petrovka that houses the headquarters of the Moscow militia. His friend was not in his office, so he tried the squad room and found him talking to a bunch of colleagues.

'Sorry I'm late,' he said.

'No sweat, let's go.'

There was no question of two men on their salaries eating out, but the militia provided a very low-budget canteen with a lunch-voucher system and the food was adequate. Both men turned towards the door. Just inside it was a noticeboard. Volsky cast a glance at it and stopped dead.

'Come on,' said his friend. 'There'll be no tables left.'

'Tell me,' said Volsky when they were seated, each with a plate of stew and half a litre of beer. 'The squad room . . .'

'What about it?'

'The noticeboard. Inside the door. There's a picture. Sort of copy of a crayon drawing. Old guy with funny teeth. What's the story?'

'Oh, that,' said Inspector Novikov, 'our mystery man. Apparently some woman at the British embassy break-in. Two guys. They didn't steal anything & trashed the place. She disturbed them so they kicked her out. But she caught a look at one of them.'

'When was this?'

'We have a problem, my dear Rick,' he said. 'The volume of material you have brought us is quite enormous and of inestimable value. High among these documents are the pen-portraits and photos you supplied of all the top control officers for spies being "run" inside the USSR.'

Ames was puzzled, trying to register through a fuzz of alcohol. 'Yes, anything wrong?' he asked.

'Not wrong, just a puzzle,' said Mechulayev and produced a photograph which he laid on the coffee table.

'This one. A certain Jason Monk. Right?'

'Yeah, that's him.'

'In your reports you describe his reputation in the SE Division as "a rising star". Meaning, we presume, that he controls one, maybe two assets inside the Soviet Union.'

'That's the view around the office, or it was when I last looked in. But you must have them.'

'Ah, my dear Rick, *that* is the problem. All the traitors you kindly revealed to us have now been identified, arrested and . . . talked to. And each has been, how shall I put it . . .' The Russian recalled the shuddering men he had faced in the interrogation room after Grishin had introduced the prisoners to his own personal brand of advice to co-operate.

'They have all been very frank, very candid, most co-operative. Each has told us who his control officers were, in some cases several of them. But no Jason Monk. Not one. Of course, false names can be used, usually are. But the picture, Rick. Not one recognized the picture. Now, you see my problem? Who does Monk run, and where are they?'

'I don't know. I can't understand it. They must have been on the 301 files.'

'My dear Rick, neither can we, because they weren't.'

Before the meeting ended Ames had been given a vast amount of money and a tasking list. He stayed in Rome for three years and betrayed everything he could, an enormous haul of secret and top-secret documents.

Among these were four more agents, but all non-Russians, nationals of the East European bloc countries. But task number one was clear and simple: on your return to Washington or hopefully before, find out who Monk runs in the USSR.

While Detective-Inspectors Novikov and Volsky had been indulging in their informative lunch in the canteen at militia headquarters, the Duma had been in full session.

It had taken time to recall the Russian Parliament from its summer recess, for so large is the territory that many of the delegates had to travel thousands of miles to attend the constitutional debate. Nevertheless, the debate was calculated to be of extraordinary importance because the issue at stake was a change of the constitution.

After the unforeseen death of President Cherkassov, Article 59 of the constitution required the Prime Minister to take over the presidency per interim. The period of interregnum was decreed as three months.

Prime Minister Ivan Markov had indeed taken over the acting presidency, but, after consulting a number of experts, had been advised that as Russia was due a fresh presidential election in June 2000, to have set an earlier one for October 1999 could cause serious dislocation, even chaos.

The motion before the House was therefore in favour of a once-only amendment act, extending the acting presidency for three further months and advancing the year 2000 election from June to January.

The word Duma comes from the verb *dumat*, meaning to think or contemplate, thus 'a place of thinking'. Many observers felt the Duma more a place of screaming and shouting than of mature contemplation. On that hot summer's day it certainly justified the latter description.

The debate lasted all day, rising to levels of passion such that the Speaker spent much of his time shouting

er, and at one time threatened to suspend
until further notice.
o delegates were so abusive that the Speaker
ed their ejection, accompanied after violent scuf-
- recorded by the television cameras - until the
lled pair were on the pavement outside. There both,
disagreed violently with each other, held
romptu press conferences which degenerated into a
vement brawl until broken up by the police.
Inside the chamber, as the air-conditioning system
roke down under the strain, and the sweating delegates
f what purported to be the world's third most populous
democracy screamed and swore at each other, the line-
up became clear.

The fascist Union of Patriotic Forces, under orders
from Igor Komarov, insisted the presidential elections
should be decreed for October, three months after the
death of Cherkassov and in accordance with Article 59.
Their tactic was obvious. The UPF was so far ahead in
the polls that it could only see its own access to supreme
power being advanced by nine months.

The neo-Communists of the Soviet Union and the
reformists of the Democratic Alliance for once found
themselves in agreement. Both were trailing in the polls
and needed all the time they could get to restore their
positions. Put another way, neither was ready for an
early election.

The debate, or shouting match, raged until sundown
when an exhausted and hoarse Speaker finally decreed
that enough voices had been heard for a vote to be called.
The left-wing and the centrists voted together to defeat
the ultra-right, and the motion was carried. The J
2000 presidential elections were rescheduled for
January 2000.

Within an hour the outcome of the vote was ca
across the nation by the national TV newscast V
as its lead item. Embassies throughout the
worked late, and lights burned as coded cable
ambassadors to their home governments flooded

It was because the British embassy was also still fully staffed that 'Gracie' Fields was at his desk when the call from Inspector Novikov came through.

YALTA, SEPTEMBER 1986

The day was hot and there was no air-conditioning in the taxi that rattled along the coastal highway north-eastwards out of Yalta. The American wound down the window to let the cooler air from the Black Sea blow over him. Leaning to one side he was also able to see in the rear-view mirror above the driver's head. No car from the local 'Cheka' seemed to be following.

The long cruise from Marseilles via Naples, Malta and Istanbul had been tiresome but tolerable. Monk had played his part in a manner that aroused no suspicion. With grey hair, tinted glasses and elaborate courtesy he was just another academic retiree taking in a summer vacation cruise.

His fellow Americans on board had accepted that he shared their sincere belief that the only hope for world peace was for the peoples of the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to get to know each other better. One of them, a spinster teacher from Connecticut, was much taken with the exquisitely mannered Texan who held out her chair and tipped his low-crowned stetson whenever they met on deck.

At Varna in Bulgaria he had not gone ashore, pleading a touch of the sun. But at all the other ports of call he had accompanied the tourists of five Western nationalities to ruins, ruins and more ruins.

At Yalta he stepped down for the first time in his life onto the soil of Russia. Exhaustively prepared and briefed as he was, it was easier than he had thought. For one thing, although the *Armenia* was the only cruise-liner in port, there were a dozen other cargo freighters from outside the USSR, and their crews had no trouble wandering ashore.

Monk dismounted in front of the main gate and paid off the taxi-driver. He paid in roubles, but added a five-dollar tip and a wink. The driver grinned, nodded and left.

There was a big crowd in front of the turnstiles, mainly Russian children with their teachers on an educational excursion. Monk waited in line, keeping an eye open for men in shiny suits. There were none. He paid his entrance, went through the barrier and spotted the ice-cream booth. Buying a large vanilla cone, he found a secluded park bench, sat down and started to lick.

A few minutes later a man sat at the other end of the bench, studying a plan of the vast gardens. Behind the map, no-one could see his lips move. Monk's lips were moving because he was licking an ice-cream.

'So, my friend, how are you?' asked Pyotr Solomin.

'The better for seeing you, old pal,' muttered Monk.

'Tell me, are we under surveillance?'

'No, I have been here for an hour. You were not followed. Nor I.'

'My people are very happy with you, Peter. The details you provide will help shorten the Cold War.'

'I just want to bring the bastards down,' said the Siberian. 'Your ice-cream is melting. Throw it away, I'll get two more.'

Monk threw his dripping stub into the trash-can nearby. Solomin strolled over to the booth and bought two cones. When he came back the gesture enabled him to sit closer.

'I have something for you. Film. Inside the cover of my map. I will leave it on the bench.'

'Thank you. Why not transmit in Moscow? My people were a bit suspicious,' said Monk.

'Because there is more, but it must be spoken.'

He began to describe what was happening that summer of 1986 inside the Politburo and the Defence Ministry in Moscow. Monk kept a straight face to

prevent himself giving a long, low whistle. Solomin talked for half an hour.

'Is this true, Peter? It is really happening at last?'

'As true as I sit here. I have heard the Defence Minister himself confirm it.'

'It will change many things,' said Monk 'Thank you, old hunter. But I must go.'

As strangers on a park bench who have talked to each other, Monk held out his hand. Solomin stared in fascination.

'What is that?'

It was a ring. Monk did not usually wear rings, but it went with the persona of a Texan. A Navajo ring of turquoise and raw silver of the sort worn all over Texas and New Mexico. He could see the Udegey tribesman from the Primorskiy Krai loved it. On a gesture Monk slipped it from his hand and gave it to the Siberian.

'For me?' asked Solomin.

He had never asked for money and Monk had guessed he would offend if he offered it. From the Siberian's expression the ring was more than recompense, a hundred dollars' worth of turquoise and silver hacked from the hills of New Mexico and crafted by Ute or Navajo silversmiths.

Aware that an embrace was impossible in public, Monk turned to go. He looked back. Pyotr Solomin had slipped the ring onto the small finger of his left hand and was admiring it. It was the last image Monk had of the hunter from the east.

The *Armenia* sailed into Odessa and discharged its human cargo. Customs examined every suitcase but they were looking only for anti-Soviet printed material. Monk had been told they never did a body-search of a foreign tourist unless the KGB was in charge, and that would be for a very special reason.

Monk had his rows of tiny transparencies between two layers of plaster tape adhering to one buttock. With the other Americans Monk closed his suitcase and all were

hustled by the Intourist guide through the formalities and onto the Moscow train.

In the capital next day Monk dropped off his consignment at the embassy, from whence it would come home to Langley in the diplomatic bag, and flew back to the States. He had a very long report to write.

CHAPTER SEVEN

'Good evening, British Embassy,' said the operator on Sofiskaya Quay.

'Shto?' said a bewildered voice at the other end of the line.

'*Dobriy vecher, angliyskoye posolstvo,*' the operator repeated in Russian.

'I want the Bolshoi Theatre ticket office,' said the voice.

'I'm afraid you have the wrong number, caller,' said the operator and hung up.

The listeners at the bank of monitors in the headquarters of FAPS! the Russian electronic eavesdropping agency, heard the call and logged it, but otherwise thought no more of it. Wrong numbers were two a penny.

Inside the embassy the operator ignored the flashing lights of two more incoming calls, consulted a small notebook and dialled an internal number.

'Mr Fields?'

'Yes.'

'Switchboard here. Someone just called asking for the Bolshoi Theatre ticket office.'

'Right, thank you.'

'Gracie' Fields rang Jock Macdonald. Internal extensions were regularly 'swept' by the man from the Security Service and were deemed secure.

'My friend from Moscow's Finest just called,' he said. 'He used the emergency code. He needs a call-back.'

'Keep me posted,' said the head of station.

Fields checked his watch. One hour between calls and five minutes gone. At a public phone in the lobby of a bank two blocks from the militia building, Inspector Novikov also checked his watch and decided to take a

coffee to fill the intervening fifty minutes. Then he would report to another public phone a block further down and wait.

Fields left the embassy ten minutes later and drove slowly to the Kosmos Hotel on Prospekt Mira. Built in 1979, modern by Moscow standards, the Kosmos has a row of public phone booths close to the lobby.

An hour after the call came to the embassy he checked a notepad from his jacket pocket and dialled. Public booth-to-booth calls are a nightmare for counter-intelligence organizations and virtually uncheckable because of the sheer numbers of them.

'Boris?' Novikov was not called Boris. His given name was Yevgeni, but when he heard 'Boris' he knew it was Fields on the line.

'Yes. That drawing you gave me. Something has come up. I think we should meet.'

'All right. Join me for dinner at the Rossiya.'

Neither man had any intention of going to the vast Rossiya Hotel. The reference was to a bar called the Carousel halfway up Tverskaya Street. It was cool and dark enough to be discreet. Again the time lapse was one hour.

Like many of the larger British embassies, the Moscow legation contains on its staff a member of the British internal Security Service known as MI5. This is the sister service of the foreign intelligence-gathering Secret Intelligence Service, wrongly but popularly called MI6.

The task of the MI5 man is not to gather information about the host country but to guarantee the security of the embassy, its various out-stations and its staff.

The staff do not regard themselves as prisoners and in Moscow during the summer frequent a pretty bathing spot outside the city where the River Moskva curves in a manner that exposes a small sandy beach. For diplomatic staff this is a favoured picnicking and bathing resort.

Before he was elevated to the rank of inspector and

transferred to Homicide, Yevgeni Novikov had been the officer in charge of that country district, including the resort area known as Serebryaniy Bor, or Silver Wood.

It was here he had got to know the then British Security Service officer, who introduced him to the newly arrived Gracie Fields.

Fields cultivated the young policeman and eventually suggested that a small monthly retainer in hard currency could make life easier for a man on a fixed salary in inflationary times. Inspector Novikov became a source, low-level it was true, but occasionally useful. During that week the Homicide detective was going to repay all the effort.

'We have a body,' he told Fields as they sat in the gloom of the Carousel and sipped chilled beer. 'I'm pretty sure it's the man in the drawing you gave me. Old, steel teeth, you know . . .'

He narrated the events as he had learned them from his colleague Volsky on the John Doe desk.

'Nearly three weeks, that's a long time to be dead in this weather. The face must be ghastly,' said Fields. 'It might not be the same man.'

'He was only in the forest for a week. Then nine days in a fridge. He should be recognizable.'

'I'll need a photograph, Boris. Can you get one?'

'I don't know. They're all with Volsky. Do you know of a man called Investigator Chernov?'

'Yes, he's been round to the embassy. I gave him one of the drawings, too.'

'I know,' said Novikov. 'Now they're all over the place. Anyway, he'll be back. Volsky will have told him by now. He'll have a real photograph of the corpse's face.'

'For himself, not for us.'

'It could be difficult.'

'Well, try, Boris, try. You're in Homicide, aren't you? Say you want to show it around some gangland contacts. Make any excuse. This is a homicide now.'

That's what you do, isn't it? Solve murders?'

'Supposed to,' admitted Novikov gloomily. He wondered if the Englishman knew the clear-up rate for gang killings was 3 per cent.

'There'll be a bonus in it for you,' said Fields. 'When our staff are attacked we are not ungenerous.'

'All right,' said Novikov. 'I'll try and get one.'

As it happened he did not need to bother. The mystery-man file came to Homicide of its own accord, and two days later he was able to abstract one of the sheaf of photos of the face taken out in the woods by the Minsk Highway.

LANGLEY, NOVEMBER 1986

Carey Jordan was in an exceptionally good mood. Such moods were brief in late 1986 because the Iran-Contra scandal was raging through Washington, and Jordan more than most others knew how deeply the CIA had been involved.

But he had just been summoned to the office of the Director, William Casey, to receive the warmest plaudits. The cause of such unaccustomed benignity from the old Director was the reception in the highest quarters of the news brought back from Yalta by Jason Monk.

In the early eighties, when Yuri Andropov had been President of the USSR, the former KGB chief had personally instituted a series of highly aggressive policies against the West. It was the dying Andropov's last desperate attempt to break the will of the NATO alliance by intimidation.

At the core of the policy was the deployment through the Soviet satellite countries of Eastern Europe of new medium-range missiles. With three independently targeted nuclear bombs in each missile, the SS-20s were zeroed at every town and city in Europe from north Norway down to Sicily.

Ronald Reagan was in the White House at the time

and Margaret Thatcher in Downing Street. The two Western leaders decided they would not be browbeaten by threats and resolved that for every missile aimed at the West, they would aim one back.

The Pershing II and the Cruise were deployed throughout Britain and Western Europe, despite constant and noisy demonstrations by the European Left. Reagan and Thatcher refused to budge.

The American Star Wars programme forced the USSR to try for an anti-missile system of her own. Andropov died, Chernenko came and went, Gorbachev came to power, but still the war of wills and industrial power went on.

Mikhail Gorbachev had become General Secretary of the Party in March 1985. He was a dedicated Communist born and raised. The difference was that unlike his predecessors he was pragmatic and refused to accept the lies that they had swallowed. He insisted on knowing the real facts and figures of Soviet industry and economy. When he saw them he was traumatized.

He still thought that the wheezing cart-horse of the Communist economy could be transformed into an efficient racer by a bit of fine-tuning. Hence perestroika or re-structuring.

By the summer of 1986, deep in the heart of the Kremlin and the Defence Ministry, it was becoming clear this would not work. The arms-industrial complex and the weapons procurement programme were absorbing 60 per cent of Soviet gross domestic product, an unsustainable figure. The people were at last becoming restive with their privations.

That summer a major examination was undertaken to see how long the Soviet Union could keep up the pace. The picture in the report could not have been blacker. Industrially, the capitalist West was out-performing the Russian dinosaur at every level. It was that report Solomin had brought in microfilm form to the park bench at Yalta.

What it said, and what Solomin confirmed verbally, was that if the West could hang on for two more years the Soviet economy would come apart at the seams, and the Kremlin would have to concede and dismantle. As in a game of poker, the Siberian had just shown the West the Kremlin's entire hand.

The news went right into the White House and across the Atlantic to Mrs. Thatcher. Both, beset by internal hostility and doubt, took heart. Bill Casey was congratulated by the Oval Office and passed the plaudits on to Carey Jordan. He summoned Jason Monk to share his congratulations. At the end of their talk Jordan brought up a topic he had raised before.

'I have a real problem with those damn files of yours, Jason. You can't just leave them sitting in your safe. If anything happened to you, we wouldn't know where to begin to handle these two assets, Lysander and Orion. You have to log them with the others.'

It had been over a year since the first treachery of Aldrich Ames and six months since the disaster of the missing agents had become apparent. The culprit was still in Rome. Technically the mole-hunt still plodded on, but the urgency had gone out of it.

'If it ain't broke, don't fix it,' pleaded Monk. 'These guys are putting their lives on the line. They know me and I know them. We trust each other. Let it be.'

Jordan had known before of the strange bond that could be forged between asset and handler. It was a relationship the agency officially frowned on for two reasons. The agent-runner might have to be moved to a different post, or might retire or die. A too-personal relationship could mean the asset deep in the heart of Russia might decide he could not or would not go on with a new handler. Secondly, if anything happened to the asset, the agency man could become too depressed to retain his usefulness. In a long career an asset might have several handlers. Monk's one-on-one bond with his two agents worried Jordan. It was . . . irregular.

On the other hand, Monk was a one-off himself. If

Jordan had but known it, which he did not, Monk made a point of ensuring each asset inside Moscow (Turpin had left Madrid and was back home, producing amazing material from the very heart of K Directorate of the First CD) received long personal letters from him, along with the usual tasking lists.

Jordan settled for a compromise. The files containing details of the men, where and how they were recruited, how they were 'serviced', their different postings – everything but their names and yet quite enough to identify them – would be transferred to the DDO's own personal safe. If anyone wanted to get at them, he would have to go by the DDO himself and explain why. Monk settled for that and the transfer was made.

Inspector Novikov was right about one thing. Investigator Chernov did indeed reappear at the embassy. He came the next morning, 5 August. Jock Macdonald asked him to be escorted to his office where he masqueraded as an attaché of the Chancery section.

'We think we may have found the man who broke into your colleague's apartment,' said Chernov.

'My congratulations, Investigator.'

'Unfortunately, he is dead.'

'Ah, but you have a photograph?'

'I do. Of the body. Of the face. And . . . ' he tapped a canvas bag by his side, 'I have the overcoat he was probably wearing.'

He placed a glossy print on Macdonald's desk. It was fairly gruesome, but a close match to the crayon drawing.

'Let me summon Miss Stone and see if she can identify this un-fortunate man.'

Celia Stone was escorted in by Fields, who remained. Macdonald warned her what she was about to see was not pretty, but he would be grateful for her advice. She glanced at the photo and put her hand over her mouth. Chernov took out the frayed ex-army greatcoat and held

it up. Celia looked desperately at Macdonald and nodded.

'That's him. That was the man who . . .'

'You saw running out of your apartment. Of course. Clearly, thieves fall out, Investigator. I am sure it is the same the world over.'

Celia Stone was escorted out.

'Let me say on behalf of the British Government, Investigator, that you have done a remarkable job. We may never know the man's name, but it matters little now. The unfortunate wretch is dead. Be assured the most favourable report will be received by the commanding general of the Moscow militia,' Macdonald told the beaming Russian.

As he left the embassy and climbed into his car Chernov was glowing. The moment he got back to Petrovka he passed the whole file from Burglary to Homicide. The fact there was supposed to be a second burglar involved was irrelevant. Without a description or the dead man's testimony, it was a needle in a haystack.

After he had left, Fields returned to Macdonald's office. The head of station was pouring himself a coffee.

'What do you reckon?' he asked.

'My source says the man was beaten to death. He has a pal in the John Doe office who spotted the drawing on the wall and made the match. The post-mortem report says the old boy had been about a week in the woods before he was found.'

'And that was?'

Fields consulted the notes he had written up immediately after the talk in the Carousel Bar.

'July 24th.'

'So . . . killed about the 17th or 18th. The day after he threw that file into Celia Stone's car. The day I flew to London. These lads don't waste time.'

'Which lads?'

'Well, it's a million quid to a pint of flat beer it was the thugs commanded by that shit Grishin.'

'Komarov's chief of personal security?'

'That's one way of putting it,' said Macdonald. 'Have you ever seen his file?'

'No.'

'You should, some day. Ex-Second Chief Directorate interrogator. Deeply nasty.'

'If it was a punishment beating, and death, who was the old man?' asked Fields. Macdonald stared out of the window, across the river to the Kremlin.

'Probably the thief himself.'

'So how did an old tramp like that get hold of it?'

'I can only suppose he was some obscure employee of one kind or another, who got lucky. As it happened, extremely unlucky. You know, I really think your policeman friend is going to have to earn himself a very fat bonus.'

BUENOS AIRES, JUNE 1987

It was a bright young agent in the CIA station in the Argentine capital who first suspected Valeri Yuryevich Kruglov of the Soviet embassy might have a flaw. The American chief of station consulted Langley.

The Latin-America Division already had a file on him, dating from a previous Kruglov posting in the mid-seventies in Mexico City. They knew he was a Russian Latin-America expert, with three such postings behind him in a twenty-year career in the Soviet foreign service. Because he appeared friendly and outgoing, the file even logged his career.

Born in 1944, Valeri Kruglov was the son of a diplomat, another specialist in Latin America. It was the father's influence that got the boy into the prestigious Institute of International Relations, the MGIMO, where he learned Spanish and English. He was there from 1961 to 1966. After that he did two South American postings, in Colombia as a youth, then Mexico a decade later, before reappearing as First Secretary in Buenos Aires.

The CIA was convinced he was not KGB but a regular diplomat. His pen-portrait was of a fairly liberal, possibly pro-Western Russian, not the usual hardline *Homo sovieticus*. The reason for the alert in the summer of 1987 had been a conversation with an Argentine official, passed on to the Americans, in which Kruglov revealed that he was returning soon to Moscow, never to travel abroad again, and that his lifestyle would plunge.

Because he was a Russian, the alert involved SE Division as well, and Harry Gaunt suggested a new face be put in front of Kruglov. As he spoke Spanish and Russian, he suggested Jason Monk. Jordan agreed.

It was a simple enough task. Kruglov had only a month to go. In the words of the song, it was now or never.

Five years after the Falklands War, with democracy restored to Argentina, Buenos Aires was a relaxed capital and it was easy for the American 'businessman', partnering a girl from the American embassy, to meet Kruglov at a reception. Monk made sure they got on well and suggested a dinner.

The Russian, who, as First Secretary, had considerable freedom from his ambassador and the KGB, found the idea of dining with someone outside the diplomatic circuit attractive. Over dinner, Monk borrowed from the real-life story of his former French teacher, Mrs Brady. He explained that his mother had been an interpreter with the Red Army and after the fall of Berlin had met and fallen in love with a young American officer. Against all the rules, they had slipped away and married in the West. Thus in the parental home, Monk had been brought up to speak English and Russian with equal fluency. After that, they dropped into Russian. Kruglov found it a relief. His Spanish was excellent but his English a strain.

Within two weeks, Kruglov's real problem had emerged. At forty-three, divorced but with two teenage children, he was still sharing an apartment with his

parents. If only he had a sum adjacent to \$20,000 he could acquire his own small flat in Moscow. As a wealthy polo-player, down in Argentina to check out some new ponies, Monk would be happy to lend his new friend money.

The chief of station proposed photographing the handover of the cash, but Monk demurred.

'Blackmail won't work. He either comes as a volunteer or he won't come.'

Although Monk was junior, the COS agreed it was his ballgame. The 'play' Monk used was the enlightened-against-the-war-mongers theme. Mikhail Gorbachev, he pointed out, was hugely popular in the USA. This Kruglov already knew and it gratified him. He was very much a Gorbachev man.

Gorby, suggested Monk, was genuinely trying to dismantle the war-machine and bring peace and trust between their two peoples. The trouble was, there were still entrenched Cold War warriors on both sides, even right in the heart of the Soviet Foreign Ministry. They would try and sabotage the process. It would be so helpful if Kruglov could alert his new pal to what was really going on inside Moscow's Foreign Ministry. Kruglov must have known by then to whom he was talking, but he evinced no surprise.

To Monk, who had already developed a passion for game-fishing, it was like pulling in a tuna who had accepted the inevitable. Kruglov got his dollars, and a communications package. Details of personal plans, position and access should be sent in secret ink on a harmless letter to a 'live' letter-box in East Berlin. Hard intelligence (documents) should be photographed and passed to the CIA Moscow via one of two 'drops' in the city.

They embraced when they parted, Russian-style.

'Don't forget, Valeri,' said Monk. 'We . . . us . . . we, the good guys, are winning. Soon all this nonsense will be over and we will have helped it happen. If ever you need me, just call and I'll come.'

Kruglov flew home to Moscow and Monk returned to Langley.

'Boris here. I've got it.'

'Got what?'

'The photograph. The picture you wanted. The file came back to Homicide. That shit Chernov got shot of it. I pinched one of the best prints in the bunch. The eyes are closed, so it doesn't look so bad.'

'Good, Boris. Now, I have in my jacket pocket an envelope with five hundred pounds in it. But there's something else I need you to do. Then the envelope grows fatter. It contains one thousand British pounds.'

In his phone booth Inspector Novikov took a deep breath. He could not even work out how many hundreds of millions of roubles that sort of envelope could buy. Over a year's salary, anyway.

'Go on.'

'I want you to go and see the director in charge of all personnel and staff at the headquarters of the UPF Party and show it to him.'

'The what?'

'The Union of Patriotic Forces.'

'What the hell have they got to do with it?'

'I don't know. Just an idea. He might have seen the man before.'

'Why should he?'

'I don't know, Boris. He might have. It's just an idea.'

'What excuse do I give?'

'You're a homicide detective. You're on a case. You're following a lead. The man may have been seen hanging around party headquarters. Perhaps he was trying to break in. Did any of the guards see him lurking about in the street? That sort of thing.'

'All right. But these are important people. If I get busted, it's your fault.'

'Why should you get busted? You're a humble cop doing his job. This desperado was seen in the

hood of Komarov's house off Kiseniy
d. It's your duty to bring it to their attention,
e is dead. He might have been part of a gang.
it, and the thousand pounds are yours.
geni Novikov grumbled some more and hung up.
anglichanye, he reflected, were bloody mad. The
ool had only broken into one of their flats, after all.
a thousand pounds was worth it.

MOSCOW, OCTOBER 1987

Colonel Anatoli Grishin was frustrated, as in the manner
of one whose high-point of achievement was seemingly
over, with nothing more to do.

The last of the interrogations of the agents betrayed
by Ames was long over, the last drop of recollection and
information squeezed from the trembling men. There
had been twelve of them living in the weeping base-
ments below Lefortovo, to be brought up on demand to
confront the questionmasters from the First and Second
Chief Directorates, or taken back to Grishin's special
room in the event of recalcitrance or loss of memory.

Two, against Grishin's pleading, had only received
long terms in labour-camps instead of death. This was
because they had worked only a very short time for the
CIA or been too lowly to have done much damage. The
rest had received their death sentences. Nine had been
executed, taken to the gravelled courtyard behind the
sequestered prison wing, forced to kneel and to await
the bullet into the back of the brain. Grishin had be-

Only one remained alive, on Grishin's insistence,
He was the oldest of them all. Grishin had be-
had worked for America for twenty years before he
betrayed. He had in fact been in retirement after re-
ing to Moscow in 1980 for the last time.
He had never taken money; he did it because
disgusted by the Soviet regime and the things

And he told them so. He sat upright in his chair and told them what he thought of them and had done for twenty years. He showed more dignity and courage than all the others. He never pleaded. Because he was so old, nothing he had to say was of current value anyway. He knew of no on-going operations nor did he have names other than of CIA handlers who were themselves retired.

When it was over, Grishin hated the old general so much he kept him alive for special treatment. Now the pensioner lay in his excrement on his concrete slab and wept. Now and again Grishin looked in to make sure. It would not be until 15 March 1988 that at General Boyarov's insistence he was finally finished off.

'The point is, my dear colleague,' Boyarov told Grishin that month, 'there is nothing more to do. The ratcatcher commission must be disbanded.'

'There is surely still this other man, the one they talk of in the First Chief Directorate, the one who handles traitors here but who has not been caught.'

'Ah, the one they cannot find. Always references, but not one of the traitors had ever heard of him.'

'And if we catch his people?' asked Grishin.

'Then we catch them, and we make them pay,' said Boyarov, 'and if that happens, if Yazenevo's man in Washington can give them to us, you can reconvene your people and start again. You can even rename yourselves. You can be called the Monakh committee.'

Grishin did not get the point, but Boyarov did, and laughed uproariously. Monakh is the Russian for monk.

If Pavel Volsky thought he had heard the last of the forensic pathologist at the morgue, he was wrong. His phone rang the same morning his friend Novikov was talking covertly to an officer of British Intelligence, 7 August.

'Kuzmin here,' said a voice. Volsky was puzzled.

'Professor Kuzmin, Second Medical Institute. We

spoke a few days ago about my post-mortem on a John Doe.'

'Oh, yes, Professor, how can I help you?'

'I think it's the other way around. I may have something for you.'

'Well, thank you, what is it?'

'Last week a body was pulled out of the Moskva at Lytkarino.'

'Surely, that's their business, not ours?'

'It would have been, Volsky, but some smartass down there reckoned the body had been in the water for about two weeks – he was right, actually – and that in that time it probably floated down the current from Moscow. So the bastards shipped it back here. I've just finished with it.'

Volsky thought. Two weeks in the water in high summer. The professor must have a stomach like a concrete mixer.

'Murdered?' he asked.

'On the contrary. Wearing only undershorts. Almost certainly went for a swim in the heatwave, got into trouble and drowned.'

'But that's an accident. The Civil Authority. I'm Homicide,' protested Volsky.

'Listen, young man. Just listen. Normally there would be no identification. But those fools at Lytkarino failed to spot something. The fingers were so swollen they didn't see it. Hidden by the flesh. A wedding band. Solid gold. I removed it – had to take the finger off, actually. Inside are the words: "N. I. Akopov, from Lidia". Good, eh?'

'Very good, Professor, but if it's not a homicide . . .'

'Listen, do you ever have anything to do with Missing Persons?'

'Of course. They send me round a folio of pictures every week to see if I can make a match.'

'Well, a man with a big gold wedding-band might have family. And if he's been missing for three weeks they might have reported it. I just thought you could

benefit from my detective genius by scoring some points with your friends in Missing Persons. I don't know anyone in Missing Persons, so I called you.'

Volsky brightened up. He was always asking favours from Missing Persons. Now he might clear up a case for them and earn some kudos. He noted the details, thanked the professor and hung up.

His usual contact at Missing Persons came on the line after ten minutes.

'Do you have an MP in the name of N. I. Akopov?' asked Volsky. His contact checked the records and came back.

'Certainly do. Why?'

'Give me the details.'

'Reported missing 17 July. Never came home from work the previous night, not seen since. Reporting party, Mrs Akopov, next of kin . . .'

'Mrs Lidia Akopov?'

'How the hell did you know? She's been in four times asking for news. Where is he?'

'On a slab in the morgue at Second Medical. Went swimming and drowned. Pulled out of the river last week at Lytkarino.'

'Great. The old lady will be pleased. I mean, to have the mystery solved. You don't know who he is . . . or rather was?'

'No idea,' said Volsky.

'Only the personal private secretary to Igor Komarov.'

'The politician?'

'Our next president, no less. Thanks, Pavel, I owe you one.'

You certainly do, thought Volsky as he got on with his work.

OMAN, NOVEMBER 1987

Carey Jordan was forced to resign that month. It was not the Edward Lee Howard escape nor yet the matter of the

agents. It was Iran-Contra. Years earlier the
assist the Nicaraguan Contras in their attempts
the Marxist Sandinistas had come right from
the Oval Office. The CIA Director Bill Casey
agreed to follow those orders. Congress had said
and refused a budget. Furious at being thwarted
and others had tried to raise the budget by selling
without approval to Tehran.

When it all came out, Casey had suffered a serious
convenient seizure in his office at Langley in
December 1986. He never returned and died in May
1987. President Reagan appointed the politically
correct William Webster, FBI Director, to take over as
the Director of CIA. Carey Jordan had carried out the
demands of his President and his Director. Now one
had amnesia and the other was dead.

Webster appointed as the new Deputy Director
(Ops) a retired CIA veteran Richard Stoltz who had
been gone for six years. As such, he was clean of any
involvement in Iran-Contra. He also knew nothing of
the devastation of the SE Division two years earlier.
While he was finding his feet, the bureaucrats took over
in force. Three files were removed from the departed
DDO's safe and relogged with the main body, or what
was left of it, in the 301 files. They contained the details
of agents code-named Lysander, Orion and a new one,
Delphi.

Jason Monk knew none of this. He was on vacation in
Oman. Always hunting the sea-angling magazines for new
'hot spots' to fish, he had read of the great shoals of
yellowfin tuna that stream past the coast of Oman just
outside the capital, Muscat, in November and December.

As a courtesy he had checked in with the tiny Omani
CIA station at the embassy in the heart of
Muscat, close to the sultan's palace. He never expected
to see his CIA colleague again after their friendly
On his third day, having taken too much sun on
the open sea, he elected to stay ashore and do
shopping. He was dating a ravishing blond from

State Department and went by cat to the market at Bab el Qaboos to see if, among the stalls of ~~clothes~~ ~~spices~~ fabrics, silver and antiques, he could find something for her.

He settled on an ornate, long-spined silver coffee pot, forged long ago by some smith high in the land. The antique-shop owner wrapped it and put it in a plastic carrier-bag.

Having got himself completely lost in the labyrinth of alleys and courtyards, Monk finally emerged not on the seaward side but somewhere in the back streets. As he emerged from an alley no wider than his shoulders, he found himself in a small courtyard with a narrow entrance at one end and an exit at the other. A man was crossing the yard. He looked like a European.

Behind him were two Arabs. As they debouched into the courtyard each reached to his waist and withdrew a curved dagger. With that they ran past Monk towards their target.

Monk reacted without thinking. He swung the carrier-bag with full force, catching one of the assailants full on the side of the head. Several pounds of metal moving at full bore caused him to crash to the ground.

The other knifeman paused, caught between two fires, then swung at Monk. He saw the glittering blade high in the air, moved under the arm, blocked it and slammed a fist into the soiled dishdash robe at solar plexus height.

The man was tough. He grunted, retained his grip on his knife, but decided to run. His companion scrambled to his feet and followed, leaving one knife on the ground.

The European had turned and taken in the action without a word spoken. Clearly he knew he would have been killed but for the intervention of the blond man ten yards away. Monk saw a slim young man with olive skin and dark eyes, but not a local Arab, and wearing a white shirt and dark suit. He was about to speak when

the stranger gave a brief nod of thanks and slipped away.

Monk stooped to pick up the dagger. It was not an Omani *kunja* at all, and indeed muggings by the Omanis are unheard of. It was a Yemeni *gambiah*, with its much simpler and straighter hilt. Monk thought he knew the origin of the assailants. They were Audhali or Aulaqi tribesmen from the Yemeni interior. What the hell, he thought, were they doing so far along the coast of Oman and why did they hate the young Westerner so much?

On a hunch he went back to his embassy and sought out the CIA man there.

'Do you by any chance have a rogues' gallery of our friends at the Soviet embassy?' he asked.

It was common knowledge that since the fiasco of the civil war in Yemen in January 1986 the USSR had pulled out completely, leaving the pro-Moscow Yemeni government impoverished and embittered. Consumed with rage at their humiliation, as they saw it, Aden had to go to the West for trade credits and cash to keep going. From then on a Russian's life in Yemen would hang by a thread. Heaven knows no rage like love to hatred turned . . .

By the end of 1987 the USSR had opened a full-fledged embassy in the distinctly anti-Communist Oman and were wooing the pro-British sultan.

'I don't,' said his colleague, 'but I'll bet the Brits will.'

It was only a step down the road from the maze of narrow and humid corridors that made up the American embassy to the more elaborate British one. They penetrated the vast carved timber doors, nodded at the gatekeeper and headed across the courtyard. The whole complex had once been the mansion of a wealthy trader and was steeped in history.

On one wall of the yard was a plaque left behind by a Roman legion that marched off into the desert and was never seen again. In the centre of the space was the British flagpole which, long ago, would guarantee a slave his freedom if he could reach it. They turned left

towards the embassy building, and the senior SIS man was waiting for them. They shook hands.

'What's the prob, old boy?' asked the Englishman.

'The prob,' replied Monk, 'is that I have just seen a guy in the souk I think may be a Russian.'

It was only a small detail, but the man in the souk had worn the collar of his open-necked white shirt outside his jacket, as Russians tended to do but Westerners avoided.

'Well, let's have a look at the mug-book,' said the Brit.

He led them through the steel filigree security doors, down the cool and pillared hall and up the stairs. The British SIS operation lived on the top floor. From a safe the SIS man took an album and they flicked through it.

The newly arrived Soviet staff were all there, caught at the airport, crossing the street or at an open café terrace. The young man with the dark eyes was the last, photographed crossing the concourse of the airport on arrival.

'The local chaps are pretty helpful to us about this sort of thing,' said the SIS man. 'The Russians have to pre-announce themselves to the Foreign Ministry here and seek accreditation. We get the details. Then when they come we get a tip-off so we can be handy with a Long Tom lens. This him?'

'Yes. Any details?'

The SIS man consulted a sheaf of cards.

'Here we are. Unless it's all a bunch of lies, he's Third Secretary, aged twenty-eight. Name of Umar Gunayev. Sounds Tartar.'

'No,' said Monk thoughtfully, 'he's a Chechen. And a Muslim.'

'You think he's KGB?' asked the Britisher.

'Oh, yes, he's a spook, all right.'

'Well, thanks for that. Want us to do anything about him? Complain to the government?'

'No,' said Monk. 'We all have to make a living. Better to know who he is. They'd only send a replacement.'

they strolled back, the CIA man asked Monk, 'Did you know?' 'A hunch.'

was a bit more than that. Gunayev had been buying an orange juice at the bar of the Frontel in Aden earlier. Monk had not been the only one to recognize him that day. The two tribesmen had spotted him and decided to take revenge for the insult to their country.

Mark Jefferson arrived at Sheremetyevo Airport, Moscow, on the afternoon flight of 8 August and was met by the bureau chief of the *Daily Telegraph*.

The star political feature writer was a short, dapper man with thinning ginger hair and a short beard of the same hue. His temper, it was reputed, was the same length as his body and beard.

Without undue delay he declined to join his colleague and wife for supper but asked to be driven to the prestigious National Hotel on Manege Square.

Once there, he told his colleague he would prefer to interview Mr Komarov unaccompanied and, if need be, would engage a limousine with driver through the good offices of the hotel itself. Well rebuffed, the bureau chief drove off.

Jefferson checked in, and his details were taken by the manager himself, a tall and courteous Swede. His passport was retained by the reception clerk so that the appropriate details could be copied out and filed with the Ministry of Tourism. Before leaving London Jefferson had instructed his secretary to inform the National who he was and how important he was.

Once up in his room he called the number he had been given by Boris Kuznetsov, in their exchange faxes.

'Welcome to Moscow, Mr Jefferson,' said Kuznetsov in flawless English with a slight American accent. 'Komarov is much looking forward to your meeting.'

It was not true, but Jefferson believed it anyway. The appointment was made for seven the following evening, because the Russian politician would be out of town all day. A car and driver would be sent to the National to collect him. Satisfied, Mark Jefferson dined alone in the hotel and slept.

On the following morning, after a breakfast of bacon and eggs, Mark Jefferson decided to indulge in what he regarded as the Englishman's inalienable right in any part of the world – to take a stroll.

'A stroll?' queried the Swedish general-manager with a perplexed frown. 'Where do you want to stroll?'

'Anywhere. Get a breath of air. Stretch the legs. Probably go across to the Kremlin and look around.'

'We can provide the hotel limousine,' said the manager. 'So much more comfortable. And safer.'

Jefferson would have none of it. A stroll was what he wanted and a stroll he would have. The manager at least prevailed upon him to leave his watch and all foreign cash behind but to take a wad of million-rouble notes for the beggars. Enough to satisfy the mendicants but not enough to provoke a mugging. With luck.

The middle-aged British journalist, who, despite his eminence in the features department, had spent his career in London-based political journalism and never covered the hotspots of the world as a foreign correspondent, was back two hours later. He seemed somewhat put out.

He had been to Moscow twice before, one under Communism and eight years earlier when Yeltsin was just in power. On each occasion he had confined his experiences to the taxi from the airport, a top hotel and the British diplomatic circuit. He had always thought Moscow a drab and grubby city but had not been expecting his experiences of that morning.

His appearance had been so obviously foreign that even along the river quays and around the Alexandrov's Gardens he had been besieged by derelicts, who seem to be camping out everywhere. Twice he th-

of youths were following him. The only cars seemed to be military, police or the limousines of the rich and privileged. Still, he reasoned, he had some powerful points to put to Mr Komarov that evening.

Taking a drink before lunch – he decided to stay inside the hotel until Kuznetsov called for him – he found himself alone in the bar apart from one other, a world-weary Canadian businessman. In the manner of strangers in a bar, they fell into conversation.

‘How long you been in town?’ asked the man from Toronto.

‘Came in last night,’ said Jefferson.

‘Staying long?’

‘Back to London tomorrow.’

‘Hey, lucky you! I’ve been here three weeks, trying to do business. And I can tell you, this place is weird.’

‘No success?’

‘Oh, sure, I have the contracts. I have the office. I also have the partners. You know what happened?’

The Canadian seated himself at Jefferson’s table and explained. ‘I get in here with all the introductions in the timber business that I need, or think I need. I rent an office in a new tower-block. Two days later there’s a knock on the door. There’s a guy standing there, neat, smart, suit and tie. “Good morning, Mr Wyatt,” he says, “I’m your new partner.”’

‘You knew him?’ asked Jefferson.

‘Not from hell. He’s the representative of the local mafia. And that’s the deal. He and his people take 50 per cent of everything. In exchange they buy or forge every permit, allocation, franchise or piece of paper I will ever need. They will square away the bureaucracy on a phone call, ensure deliveries are on schedule and no labour disputes. For 50 per cent.’

‘You told him to take a running jump,’ said Jefferson.

‘No way. I learned fast. It’s called having a “roof”. Meaning protection. Without a roof you get nowhere, fast. Mainly because, if you turn them down, you have no legs. They blow them off.’

Jefferson stared at him in disbelief. 'Good God, I'd heard crime was bad here. But not like that.'

'I tell you, it's like nothing you could ever imagine.'

One of the phenomena that had amazed Western observers of Russia after the fall of Communism was the seemingly lightning rise of the Russian criminal underworld, called, for want of a better phrase, the Russian mafia. Even Russians began to refer to the *mafiya*. Some foreigners thought it was a new entity, born only after Communism ended. This was nonsense.

A vast criminal underworld had existed in Russia for centuries. Unlike the Sicilian Mafia it had no unified hierarchy and never exported itself abroad. But it existed, a great sprawling brotherhood with regional and gang chieftains and members loyal to their gangs unto death and with the appropriate tattoos to prove it.

Stalin attempted to destroy it, sending thousands of its members to the slave camps. The only result was that the *zeki* ended up virtually running the camps with the connivance of the guards, who preferred a quiet life to having their families traced and punished. In many cases the *vory v zakone*, the 'thieves by statute' or equivalents of the Mafia dons, actually ran their enterprises on the outside from their cabins in the camps.

One of the ironies of the Cold War is that Communism would probably have collapsed ten years earlier but for the underworld. Even the Party bosses finally had to make their covert pact with it.

The reason was simple: it was the only thing in the USSR that ran with any degree of efficiency. A factory manager, producing a vital product, might see his principal machine-tool grind to a halt owing to the breakdown of a single valve. If he went through the bureaucratic channels he would wait six to twelve months for his valve while his entire production plant stood idle.

Or he could have a word with his brother-in-law who knew a man who had contacts. The valve would arrive within a week. Later the factory manager would turn a

blind eye to the disappearance of a consignment of his steel plate, which would find its way to another factory whose steel plate had not arrived. Then both factory managers would cook the books to show they had completed their 'norms'.

In any society where a combination of sclerotic bureaucracy and raw incompetence has caused all the cogs and wheels to seize up, the black market is the only lubricant. The USSR ran on that lubricant throughout its life and depended utterly upon it for the last ten years.

The mafia simply controlled the black market. All it did after 1991 was come out of the closet to prosper and expand. Expand it certainly did, moving rapidly from the usual areas of racketeering – alcohol, drugs, protection, prostitution – into every single facet of life.

What *was* impressive was the sheer speed and ruthlessness with which the virtual takeover of the economy was achieved. Three factors enabled this to happen. The first was the capacity for immediate and massive violence the Russian mafia demonstrated if it was frustrated in any way, a violence that would have made the American Cosa Nostra look positively squeamish. Anybody, Russian or foreign, objecting to mafia involvement in their enterprise was given one warning – usually a beating or an outbreak of arson – and then executed. This applied right to the heads of major banks.

The second factor was the helplessness of the police who, underfunded, understaffed and without any experience or forewarning of the blizzard of crime and violence that was going to overwhelm them in the aftermath of Communism, simply could not cope. The third factor was the pandemic Russian tradition of corruption. The massive inflation that followed 1991 until it steadied around 1995 assisted in this.

Under Communism the exchange rate stood at two US dollars to the rouble, a ridiculous and artificial rate in terms of value and purchasing power, but enforced

within the USSR, where not lack of money but lack of goods to buy with it was the problem. Inflation wiped out savings and reduced fixed-salary employees to poverty.

When a street cop's weekly wage is worth less than his socks it is hard to persuade him not to take a banknote enclosed in an evidently forged driving licence.

But that was small beer. The Russian mafia ran the system right up to the senior civil servants, recruiting almost the entire bureaucracy as their allies. And the bureaucracy runs everything in Russia.

Thus permits, licences, civic real estate, concessions, franchises – all could quickly be bought from the issuing civil servant, enabling the mafia to create astronomical profits.

The other skill of the Russian mafia that impressed observers was the speed with which they moved from conventional racketeering (while keeping a firm hold on it) into legitimate business. It took the American Cosa Nostra a generation to realize that legitimate businesses, acquired from racket-profits, served both to increase profits and launder crime-money. The Russians did it in five years and by 1995 owned or controlled 40 per cent of the national economy. By then they had already gone international, favouring their three specialities of arms, drugs and embezzlement, backed up by instant violence, and targeting all Western Europe and North America.

The trouble was, by 1998 they had overdone it. The sheer greed had broken the economy off which they lived. By 1996 fifty billion US dollars' worth of Russian wealth, mainly gold, diamonds, precious metals, oil, gas and timber, was being stolen and illegally exported. The goods were brought with almost worthless roubles, and even then at knock-down prices, from the bureaucrats running the State organs, and sold for dollars abroad. Some of the dollars would be reconverted to a blizzard of roubles and brought back to fund more bribes and more crime. The rest were stashed abroad

Once inside, they closed again and the guard approached the driver's window. He checked the ID, glanced in the back, nodded and lowered the steel spikes.

Boris Kuznetsov, alerted by the gate, was in the entrance of the house to greet the guest. He led the British journalist to a well-appointed reception area on the first floor, a room adjacent to Komarov's own office and on the other side from that once occupied by the late N. I. Akopov.

Igor Komarov permitted neither drinking nor smoking in his presence, something Jefferson did not know and never learned, because it was not mentioned. A non-drinking Russian is a rarity in a country where drinking is almost a sign of manhood. Jefferson, who had screened a number of videos of Komarov in his man-of-the-people mode, had seen him with the obligatory glass in his hand, drinking innumerable toasts in the Russian fashion, and showing no damage for it. He did not know Komarov was always supplied with spring water. That evening, only coffee was offered, and Jefferson declined.

After five minutes Igor Komarov entered, an imposing figure of about fifty, grey-haired, just under six feet, with staring hazel eyes that his fans described as 'mesmeric'.

Kuznetsov shot to his feet and Jefferson followed a mite more slowly. The PR adviser made the introductions and the two men shook hands. Komarov seated himself first, in a button-back leather chair that was slightly higher than those occupied by the other two.

From his inner breast pocket Jefferson produced a slim tape-recorder and asked if there would be no objection. Komarov inclined his head to indicate he understood the inability of most Western journalists to use shorthand. Kuznetsov nodded encouragingly at Jefferson to start.

'Mr President, the news of the moment is the recent decision by the Duma to extend the interim presidency

by three months but to bring forward next year's elections to January. How do you view that decision?'

Kuznetsov translated rapidly and listened while Komarov replied in sonorous Russian. When he had finished, the interpreter turned to Jefferson.

'Clearly I and the Union of Patriotic Forces were disappointed by the decision, but as democrats we accept it. It will be no secret to you, Mr Jefferson, that things in this country, which I love with a deep passion, are not good. For too long incompetent government has tolerated a high level of economic profligacy, corruption and crime. Our people suffer. The longer this goes on, the worse it will become. Thus the delay is to be regretted. I believe that we could have won the presidency this October, but if January is must be, then we will win in January.'

Mark Jefferson was far too experienced an interviewer not to realize that the answer was too pat, too rehearsed, as if delivered by a politician who had been asked the same question many times and could reel off the answer as if by rote. In Britain and America it was customary for politicians to be more relaxed with members of the press, many of whom they knew on first-name terms. Jefferson prided himself on being able to present a portrait in the round, using both the words of the interviewee and his own impressions to create a real newspaper article rather than a litany of political clichés. But this man was like an automaton.

The reporter's experience had already taught him that Eastern European politicians were accustomed to a far greater degree of deference from the press than British or American ones, but this was different. The Russian was stiff and formal as a tailor's dummy.

By the third question Jefferson realized why: Komarov clearly hated the media and the whole process of being interviewed. The Londoner tried a light-hearted approach, but there was not a flicker of amusement from the Russian. A politician taking himself very seriously was nothing new, but this man was a

fanatic of self-esteem. The answers continued to come out as if on autocue.

He glanced at Kuznetsov with puzzlement. The young PR chief and interpreter was clearly American-educated, bilingual, worldly and sophisticated, yet he treated Igor Komarov with spaniel-like devotion. Jefferson tried again.

'You will know, sir, that in Russia most of the real power is vested in the office of the President, far more than in the President of the United States or the Prime Minister of Great Britain. If you were to contemplate the first six months of that power in your hands, what changes would an objective observer see taking place? In other words, the priorities?'

Still the answer came as if from a political tract. Routine mention was made of the need to crush organized crime, reform a burdensome bureaucracy, restore agricultural production and reform the currency. Further questions as to precisely how this could be achieved were met with meaningless clichés. No politician in the West could have got away with this sort of thing but it was clear Kuznetsov expected Jefferson to be completely satisfied.

Recalling the briefing he had received from his own editor, Jefferson asked Komarov how he intended to bring about the rebirth of the greatness of the Russian nation. For the first time he got a reaction.

Something he said seemed to jolt Komarov as if he had received an electric shock. The Russian sat staring at him with those unblinking pale brown eyes, to the point that Jefferson could no longer meet the gaze and glanced at his tape-recorder. Neither he nor Kuznetov noticed that the president of the UPF had gone deathly pale and two small bright red spots burned high on each cheek. Without a word Komarov suddenly rose and left the room, passing into his own office and closing the door behind him. Jefferson raised an enquiring eyebrow at Kuznetsov. The younger man was clearly also puzzled but his natural urbanity took over.

'I am sure the president will not be long. Clearly he has just recalled something urgent that must be done without delay. He will be back as soon as he has finished.'

Jefferson reached forward and switched off his recorder. After three minutes and a brief telephone call Komarov returned, sat down and answered the question in measured tones. As he began, Jefferson put the machine back on.

An hour later Komarov indicated the interview was at an end. He rose, nodded stiffly at Jefferson and withdrew to his office. In the doorway he beckoned Kuznetsov to follow him.

The PR adviser emerged two minutes later and was clearly embarrassed.

'I'm afraid we have a problem with the transport,' he said as he escorted Jefferson down the stairs to the lobby. 'The car you came in is urgently required and all the others belong to staff members working late. Could you take a taxi back to the National?'

'Well, yes, I suppose so,' said Jefferson, who now wished he had brought his own transport from the hotel and ordered it to wait for him. 'Perhaps you could order one?'

'I'm afraid they don't take phone orders any more,' said Kuznetsov, 'but just let me show you how to find one.'

He led the mystified feature writer from the main door to the steel gate, which rolled aside to let them pass. In the side-street Kuznetsov pointed to Kiselný Boulevard a hundred yards away.

'Right on the boulevard you'll pick up a cruising cab in seconds and at this hour you'll be back at the hotel in fifteen minutes. I do hope you understand. It's been a pleasure, a real pleasure, to meet you, sir.'

With that, he was gone. An extremely put-out Mark Jefferson walked up the narrow street to the main road. He was fiddling with his tape-recorder as he walked. Finally he slipped the machine back into the inside

breast pocket of his blazer as he reached Kiselnny Boulevard. He glanced up and down for a cab. Predictably there were none. With an irritable scowl he turned left, towards central Moscow, and began to walk, glancing over his shoulder every now and then for a taxi.

The two men in black leather jackets saw him come out of the side street and walk towards them. One of them opened the rear passenger door of their car and they slid out. When the Englishman was ten yards away each man slipped a hand inside his jacket and produced a silenced automatic. No words were spoken and only two bullets fired. Both hit the journalist in the chest.

The force stopped the walking man, and then he simply sat down as his legs gave way. The torso began to topple but the two killers had covered the ground between them. One held him upright and the other flicked a hand inside the jacket, quickly pulling out the tape-recorder from one breast pocket and the wallet from the other.

Their car rolled up beside them and they jumped in. After it roared away a woman passer-by looked down at the body, thought it was another drunk, saw the trickling blood and began to scream. No-one took the car number. It was false anyway.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Someone in a restaurant, down the street from the killing, had heard the screaming woman, looked outside and dialled 03 on the manager's phone to summon an ambulance.

The crew had thought they might have a cardiac arrest until they saw the bullet holes in the front of the double-breasted blue blazer and the mess of blood beneath. They called the police as they raced towards the nearest hospital.

An hour later Inspector Vasili Lopatin of the Homicide Division stared moodily at the corpse on the trolley in the trauma unit of the Botkin Hospital while the night duty surgeon peeled off his rubber gloves.

'Not a chance,' said the surgeon. 'A single bullet, straight through the heart, close range. It's still in there somewhere. The post-mortem will recover it for you.'

Lopatin nodded. Big deal. There were enough handguns in Moscow to re-equip the army and his chances of finding the gun that fired the bullet, let alone the owner of the hand on the gun, were about zero and he knew it. Out on Kiselny Boulevard he had established that the woman who apparently saw the killing had disappeared. It seemed she had seen two killers and a car. No descriptions.

On the trolley the ginger beard jutted angrily upwards above the pale freckled body. The expression on the face was of mild surprise. An orderly pulled a green sheet across the cadaver to blot out the glare from the arcs to the eyes that could see nothing anyway.

The body was naked now. On a side table lay the clothes and in a steel kidney dish a few personal effects. The detective walked over and took the jacket, looking at the label inside the collar. His heart sank. It was foreign.

'Can you read this?' he asked the surgeon.

The doctor peered at the embroidered tag in the jacket.

'L-A-N-D-A-U,' he read slowly, then, underneath the outfitter's name, 'Bond Street.'

'And this?' Lopatin pointed at the shirt.

'Marks & Spencer,' read the surgeon. 'That's in London,' he added helpfully. 'I think Bond Street is, too.'

There are over twenty words in Russian for human excrement and parts of the male and female genitalia. Mentally Lopatin ran through them all. A British tourist, oh God. A mugging that went wrong, and it had to be a British tourist.

He went over to the personal effects. There were few of them. No coins of course; Russian coins were long since valueless. A neatly folded white handkerchief, a small sylthane bag, a signet ring and a watch. He assumed the screaming woman had prevented the muggers taking the watch off the left wrist or the ring off the finger.

But neither had any identification. Worst of all, no wallet. He went back to the clothes. The shoes had the word 'Church' inside them: plain black lace-ups. The socks, dark grey, had nothing, and the words 'Marks & Spencer' were repeated in the undershorts. The tie, according to the doctor, was from somewhere called 'Turnbull & Asser' in Jermyn Street; London again, no doubt.

More in desperation than in hope, Lopatin returned to the blazer. The medical orderly had missed something. Something hard in the top pocket where some men kept their spectacles. He withdrew it, a card of hard plastic, perforated.

It was a hotel-room key, not the old-fashioned type but the computer-fashioned kind. For security it bore no room number - that was the point, to prevent room-thieves - but it had the logo of the National Hotel.

'Where is there a phone?' he asked.

Had it not been August, Benny Svenson, the manager of the National, would have been at home. But the tourists were many and two staff were off with summer colds. He was working late when his own operator came through.

'It's the police, Mr Svenson.'

He depressed the 'connect' switch and Lopatin came on the line.

'Yes?'

'Is that the manager?'

'Yes, Svenson here. Who is that?'

'Inspector Lopatin, Homicide, Moscow Militia.'

Svenson's heart sank. The man had said Homicide.

'Do you have a British tourist staying with you?'

'Of course. Several. A dozen at least. Why?'

'Do you recognize this description? One metre seventy tall, short ginger hair, ginger beard, dark blue double-breasted jacket, tie with horrible stripes.'

Svenson closed his eyes and swallowed. Oh no, it could only be Mr Jefferson. He had come across him in the lobby that very evening, waiting for a car.

'Why do you ask?'

'He's been mugged. He's at the Botkin. You know it? Up near the Hippodrome?'

'Yes, of course. But you mentioned Homicide.'

'I'm afraid he's dead. His wallet and all identification papers seem to have been stolen, but they left a plastic room key with your logo on it.'

'Stay there, Inspector, I'll come at once.'

For several minutes Benny Svenson sat at his desk consumed with horror. In twenty years in the hotel business he had never known a guest murdered.

His sole off-duty passion was the playing of bridge, and he recalled that one of his regular partners was on the staff at the British embassy. Consulting his private address book he found the diplomat's home number and called him. It was ten to midnight, the man was asleep, but came awake fast when told the news.

'Good lord, Benny, the journalist fellow? Writes for

the *Telegraph*? Didn't know he was in town. But thanks anyway.'

This will cause a hell of a flap, thought the diplomat when he put the phone down. British citizens in trouble, alive or dead, in foreign parts were a matter for the consular section, of course, but he felt he should tell someone before the morning. He rang Jock Macdonald.

MOSCOW, JUNE 1988

Valeri Kruglov had been back home for ten months. There was always a risk with an asset recruited abroad that he would change his mind on his return home and make no contact, destroying the codes, inks and papers he had been given.

There was nothing the recruiting agency could do about it, short of denouncing the man, but that would be pointless and cruel, serving no advantage. It took cool nerve to work against a tyranny from the inside, and some men did not have it.

Like everyone at Langley, Monk would never entertain comparisons between those who worked against the Moscow regime and an American traitor. The latter would be betraying the entire American people and their democratically elected government. If caught, he would get humane treatment, a fair trial, and the best lawyer he could procure.

A Russian was working against a brutal despotism that represented no more than 10 per cent of the nation and kept the other 90 per cent in subjection. If caught, he would be beaten and shot without trial, or sent to a slave-labour camp.

But Kruglov had kept his word. He had communicated three times via dead-letter boxes with interesting and high-level policy documents from inside the Soviet Foreign Ministry. Suitably edited to disguise source, this enabled the State Department to know the Soviet negotiating position before they even sat at the

table. Throughout 1987 and 1988 the East European satellites were moving to open revolt – Poland had already gone, Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia were on the boil – and it was vital to know how Moscow would seek to handle this. To know just how weak and demoralized Moscow felt itself to be was vitally important. Kruglov revealed it.

But in May agent Delphi indicated he needed a meeting. He had something important, he wanted to see his friend Jason. Harry Gaunt was distraught.

'Yalta was bad enough. No-one here slept much. You got away with it. It could have been a trap. So could this. OK, the codes indicate he's on the level. But he could have been caught. He could have spilled the lot. And you know too much.'

'Harry, there are a hundred thousand US tourists visiting Moscow these days. It's not like the old times. The KGB can't monitor them all. If the cover is perfect, it's one man among a hundred thousand. You'd have to be taken red-handed.'

'They're going to torture a US citizen? Nowadays? The cover will be perfect. I'm cautious. I speak Russian but pretend I don't. I'm just a harmless American goof-ball with a tourist guide. I don't move out of role until I know there's no surveillance. Trust me.'

America possesses a vast network of foundations interested in art of every kind and description. One of them was preparing a student group to visit Moscow to study various museums, with the high point as a visit to the famous Museum of Oriental Art on Obukha Street. Monk signed on as a mature student.

All the background and papers of Dr Philip Peters were not only perfect, they were genuine, when the student group touched down at Moscow airport in mid-June. Kruglov had been advised.

The obligatory Intourist guide met them and they stayed at the awful Rossiya Hotel, about as big as Alcatraz but without the comforts. On the third day they visited the Oriental Art Museum. Monk had studied the

details in the States. Between the showcases it had big open spaces where he was confident he could spot a 'heavy mob' if they were there following Kruglov.

He saw his man after twenty minutes. Dutifully he followed the guide and Kruglov trailed along behind. There was no 'tail', he was convinced of it by the time he headed for the cafeteria.

The Museum of Oriental Art happened to have a café, and cafés have lavatories. They took their coffees separately but Monk caught Kruglov's eye. If the man had been taken by the KGB and tortured into submission, there would be something in the eyes. Fear. Desperation. Warning. Kruglov's eyes crinkled with pleasure. Either he was the greatest 'double' the world had ever seen or he was clean. Monk rose and went to the men's room. Kruglov followed. They waited till the single hand-washer left, then embraced.

'How are you, my friend?'

'I am good. I have my own apartment now. It is so wonderful to have privacy. My children can visit and I can put them up for the night.'

'No-one suspected anything? I mean, the money?'

'No, I had been away too long. Everyone is on the take nowadays. All senior diplomats have many things brought back from abroad. I was too naive.'

'Then things really are changing, and we are helping them change,' said Monk. 'Soon the dictatorship will be over and you will live free. Not long now.'

Some schoolboys came in, piddled noisily and left. The two men washed their hands until they were gone. Monk had in any case kept the water running. It was an old trick, but unless the mike was very close or the speaker raised his voice, the sound of rushing water usually worked.

They talked for ten more minutes and Kruglov handed over the package he had brought. Real documents, hard copies, taken from Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze's office.

They embraced again and left separately. Monk

rejoined his group and flew back with them two days later. Before he left, he dropped the package with the CIA station inside the embassy.

Back home the documents revealed the USSR was pulling back on just about every Third World foreign aid programme including Cuba. The economy was cracking up and the end was in sight. The Third World could no longer be used as a lever to blackmail the West. State Department loved it.

It was Monk's second visit to the USSR on a 'black' mission. When he returned home it was to learn he had secured a further promotion. Also that Nikolai Turkin, agent Lysander, was moving to East Berlin as commander of the whole Directorate K operation inside the KGB complex there. It was a prime position, the only one giving access to every single Soviet agent in West Germany.

The hotel manager and the British head of station arrived at the Botkin within seconds of each other and were shown into a small ward where the draped body of the dead man awaited them with Inspector Lopatin. Introductions were made. Macdonald simply said, 'From the embassy.'

Lopatin's first concern was a positive identification. That was not a problem. Svenson had brought the dead man's passport and the picture in it was a perfect match. Svenson completed the formality with a glance at the face.

'Cause of death?' asked Macdonald.

'A single bullet through the heart,' said Lopatin.

Macdonald examined the jacket. 'There are two bullet holes here,' he remarked mildly.

They all examined the jacket again. Two bullet holes. But only one in the shirt. Lopatin had a second look at the body. Only one in the chest.

'The other bullet must have hit his wallet, and stopped there,' he said. He gave a grim smile. 'At least the

bastards won't be able to use all those credit cards.'

'I should get back to the hotel,' said Svenson. He was evidently badly shaken. If only the man had taken the offered hotel limousine. Macdonald accompanied him to the hospital door.

'This must be terrible for you,' he said sympathetically. The Swede nodded. 'So let us clear things up as fast as we can. I presume there will be a wife in London. The personal effects. Perhaps you could clear his room, pack his suitcase? I'll send a car for it in the morning. Thank you so much.'

Back in the private ward Macdonald had a word with Lopatin.

'We have a problem here, my friend. This is a bad business. The man was quite famous in his way. A journalist. There will be publicity. His newspaper had an office in this city. They will carry a big story. So will all the other foreign press. Why not let the embassy handle that side of things? The facts are clear, are they not? A tragic mugging that went wrong. Almost certainly the muggers called on him in Russian, but he did not understand. Thinking he was resisting, they fired. Truly tragic. But that must have been the way it was, don't you think?'

Lopatin agreed 'Of course, that's what I think, too.'

'So you will seek to find the killers, though between us, as professionals, we know you will have a hard task. Leave the matter of the repatriation of the body to our consular people. Leave the British press to us also. Agreed?'

'Yes, that seems sensible.'

'I will just need the personal effects. They have no bearing on the case any more. It's the wallet that will be the key, if ever it is found. And the credit cards, if anyone attempts to use them, which I doubt.'

Lopatin looked at the kidney dish with its meagre array of contents.

'You'll have to sign for them,' he said.

'Of course. Prepare the release form.'

The hospital produced an envelope and into it were

tipped one signet ring, one gold watch with crocodile strap, one folded handkerchief and a small sylthane bag with contents. Macdonald signed for them and took them back to the embassy.

What neither man knew was that the killers had carried out their instructions but made two inadvertent mistakes. They were told to remove the wallet containing all identifying documents including the ID card and to recover at all costs the tape-recorder.

They did not know that the British do not have to carry ID cards on their person inside Britain and only use the full passport for foreign travel; it is often left behind at the hotel. They also missed the slim plastic room key in the top pocket. The two together had provided complete identification within two hours of the killing.

The second accident they could not be blamed for. One of the two bullets had not hit the wallet at all. It had impacted into the tape-recorder hanging over the chest inside the jacket. The bullet destroyed the sensitive mechanism and tore the tiny tape to pieces so that it could never be replayed.

Inspector Novikov had secured his interview with the director of staff and personnel at the UPF party headquarters for ten o'clock on the morning of 10 August. He was somewhat nervous, expecting to be treated with blank amazement and given short shrift. Mr Zhilin affected a three-piece dark-grey suit and a precise manner, accentuated by a toothbrush moustache and rimless glasses. He gave the appearance of a bureaucrat from an earlier age, which in fact he was.

'My time is short, Inspector, please state your business.'

'Certainly, sir. I am investigating the death of a man we think may have been a criminal. A burglar. One of our witnesses believes she saw the man lurking close to these premises. Naturally, I am concerned that he might have been attempting to make an entry by night.'

Zhilin smiled thinly. 'I doubt it. These are troubled times, Inspector, and the security of this building has to be very tight.'

'I'm glad to hear it. Have you ever seen this man before?'

Zhilin stared at the photograph for less than a second. 'Good God, Zaitsev.'

'Who?'

'Zaitsev, the old cleaner. A burglar you say? Impossible.'

'Would you tell me about Zaitsev, please.'

'Nothing to tell. Engaged about a year ago. Ex-army. Seemed reliable. Came every night, Monday to Saturday, to clean the offices.'

'But not recently?'

'No, failed to show up. After two nights I had to engage a replacement. A war widow. Very thorough.'

'When would this be, when he failed to show up?'

Zhilin went to a cabinet and extracted a file. He gave the impression there was a file for everything.

'Here we are. Work-sheets. He came as usual on the night of July 15th. Cleaned as usual. Left as usual some time before dawn. Failed to appear the following night, never been seen since. That witness of yours must have seen him leaving in the small hours. Quite usual. He wasn't burgling, he was cleaning.'

'That explains it all,' said Novikov.

'Not quite,' snapped Zhilin. 'You said he was a burglar.'

'Two nights after he left here he was apparently involved in a break-in at a flat on Kutuzovsky Prospekt. The householder identified him. A week later he was found dead.'

'Disgraceful,' said Zhilin. 'This crime wave is an outrage. You people should do something about it.'

Novikov shrugged. 'We try. But they are many and we are few. We want to do the job, but we get no support from on high.'

'That will change, Inspector, that will change.' Zhilin

was given to Monk. He happened to be available. His two agents in Moscow were contributing nicely through dead-letter boxes and Colonel Turkin was in East Berlin supplying a complete breakdown of KGB activities in West Germany.

Monk ran the list of the names of the eight Soviet scientists due to attend the November conference in California through the usual checks and came up with a blank. No-one on the list had even been heard of by the CIA, let alone approached or recruited.

Because he was a terrier when presented with a problem, he tried one last track. Although relations between the CIA and its domestic counterpart, the counter-intelligence wing of the FBI, had always been strained and sometimes poisonous, and since the Howard affair more the latter, he decided to approach the FBI anyway.

It was a long shot, but he knew the bureau had a far more comprehensive list of Soviet nationals who had sought and been granted asylum in the USA than had the CIA. The long shot was not whether the FBI would help, but whether the Soviets would ever let a scientist with a relative in America leave the USSR at all. The chances were they never would, because family in the States was considered by the KGB to be a major security flaw.

Of the eight names on the list, two appeared again on the FBI record of asylum-seekers. A check revealed one name was a coincidence; the family in Baltimore had nothing whatsoever to do with the arriving Russian scientist.

The other name was odd. A Russian-Jewish refugee who had sought asylum via the US embassy in Vienna when she was in a transit camp in Austria, and been granted it, had given birth while in America yet registered her son under a different name.

Yevgenia Rozina, now of New York, had registered her son under the name of Ivan Ivanovich Blinov. Monk knew that meant Ivan Son-of-Ivan. Clearly the boy had

Novikov reflected. He really should have bought the beer. After all, he was due to collect a thousand sterling pounds from the Englishman. Now he could give him a bit extra. On the house.

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 1988

She was about forty, dark, vital and pretty. He was waiting in the lobby of her apartment block when she arrived home after picking up her son from school. The boy was a lively lad of eight.

The laughter went out of her face when he introduced himself as an officer of the Immigration Service. For any non-American-born immigrant, even with papers in perfect order, the word Immigration is enough to inspire worry, if not fear. She had no choice but to let him in.

When her son was absorbed in his homework at the kitchen table of her small but extremely clean apartment, they talked in the sitting-room. She was defensive and on guard.

But Monk was unlike the abrupt, unsmiling officials she had met before during her struggle to be accepted into the USA eight years earlier. He had charm and a winning smile and she began to relax.

'You know how it is with us civil servants, Ms Rozina. Files, files, always files. If they are complete, the boss is happy! Then what happens? Nothing. They gather dust in some archive. But when they're not, the boss gets fretful. So some small cog like me is sent out to complete the details.'

'What do you want to know?' she asked. 'My papers are in order. I work as an economist and translator. I pay my way, I pay my taxes. I cost nothing to the USA.'

'We know that, ma'am. There's no question of any irregularity in your papers. You are a citizen, naturalized. Everything in order. It's just that you registered little Ivan there under a different name. Why did you do that?'

'I gave him his father's name.'

small apartment, but all his own, better shops than anywhere in the country, a higher salary and limitless research facilities – all were his. What he did not have was the right to leave.

Once a year there was the chance for a vacation in an approved resort, at a fraction of the usual price. Then it was back inside the barbed wire, intercepted mail, tapped phones and monitored friendships.

Before he was thirty he met and married Valya, a young librarian and teacher of English. She taught him the language so that he could read the harvest of technical publications pouring in from the West in the original. They were happy at first, but slowly the marriage became blighted by one flaw; they desperately wanted a child but could not have one.

In the autumn of 1977 Ivan Blinov was staying in the spa resort of Kislovodsk in the northern Caucasus when he met Zhenya Rozina. As was often the case in the gilded cage, his wife had to take her vacation at a different time.

Zhenya was twenty-nine, ten years his junior, a divorcee from Minsk, also childless, lively, irreverent, a constant listener to the 'voices' (Voice of America and BBC) and a reader of daring magazines such as *Poland*, printed in Warsaw and much more liberal and versatile than the dreary and dogmatic Soviet publications. The shuttered scientist was entranced by her.

They agreed to correspond, but as Blinov knew his mail would be intercepted (he was a holder of secrets) he asked her to write to a friend in Arzamas-16 whose mail would not be looked at.

In 1978 they met again, by agreement, this time at the resort of Sochi on the Black Sea. Blinov's marriage was at an end in all but name. Their friendship became a torrid affair. They met again for the third and last time in 1979 at Yalta and realized they were still in love, but that it was a hopeless love.

He felt he could not divorce his wife. If there had been

another man after her, that would have been different. But there was not; she was not beautiful. But she had been a loyal wife for fifteen years and if the love had died, that was the way of things. They were still friends and he would not shame her by divorce, not in the tiny community in which they lived.

Zhenya did not disagree, but for another reason. She told him something she had not told him before. If they married it would mar his career. She was Jewish, that was enough. She had already applied to OVIR, the Department of Visas and Permissions, to emigrate to Israel. Under Brezhnev there was a new dispensation. They kissed and made love, and parted and never saw each other again.

'The rest you know,' she said.

'The transit camp in Austria, the approach to our embassy?'

'Yes.'

'And Ivan Ivanovich?'

'Six weeks after the vacation in Yalta I realized I was carrying his child. Ivan was born here, he is a US citizen. At least he will grow up free.'

'Did you ever correspond with him, let him know?'

'To what point?' she asked bitterly. 'He is married. He lives in a gilded prison, as much a prisoner as any *zek* in the camps. What could I do? Remind him of it all? Make him yearn for what he cannot reach?'

'Have you told your son about his father?'

'Yes. That he is a great man. A kind man. But far away.'

'Things are changing,' said Monk gently. 'He could probably get as far as Moscow nowadays. I have a friend. He travels often to Moscow. A businessman. You could write to the man in Arzamas-16 whose mail is not intercepted. Ask the father to come to Moscow.'

'Why? To tell him what?'

'He should know about his son,' said Monk. 'Let the boy write. I will see his father gets the letter.'

Before he went to bed, the small boy wrote in good

but touchingly flawed Russian, a two-page letter that began: 'Dear Papa . . .'

'Gracie' Fields returned to the embassy just before midday on the 11th. He knocked on Macdonald's door to find his head of station deep in gloomy thought.

'Bubble?' said the older man. Fields nodded.

When they were ensconced in Conference Room 'A' Fields tossed a photo of the dead face of an old man on the desk.

It was one of the batch taken in the woods, similar to the picture brought to the embassy by Investigator Chernov.

'You saw your man?' asked Macdonald.

'Yep. And it's pretty traumatic stuff. He was the cleaner at UPF headquarters.'

'The cleaner?'

'That's right. The office cleaner. Like Chesterton's Invisible Man. There every night but no-one noticed him. Came about ten each evening from Monday to Saturday, cleaned the offices from end to end, left before dawn. That's why he was a shabby old thing. Lived in a slum. Earned peanuts. There's more.'

Fields recounted the story of N.I. Akopov, late personal secretary of Igor Komarov, who had elected to go for an ill-advised and, as it turned out, terminal swim in the river about the middle of July.

Macdonald rose and paced the room.

'We're supposed, in our job, to rely on facts, facts and only facts,' he said. 'But let's indulge in a little supposition. Akopov left the damn document out on his desk. The old cleaner saw it, flicked through it, didn't like something he saw, and stole it. Make sense?'

'Can't fault it, Jock. Document discovered missing the next day, Akopov fired, but as he's seen it he can't be left in the land of the living. He goes swimming with two hefty lads to hold him down.'

'Probably done in a water butt. Slung in the river

pocket. I think it shows why he died. Listen.'

He switched the machine on. The voice of the dead journalist filled the room.

'Mr President, in matters of foreign affairs, particularly those concerning relations with the other republics of the USSR, how do you intend to secure the rebirth to glory of the Russian nation?'

There was a slight pause, then Kuznetsov began translating. When he had finished, there was an even longer pause and the sound of footfalls on carpet. The machine clicked off.

'Someone rose and left the room,' said Macdonald.

The machine switched back on and they heard Komarov's voice give his answer. How long Jefferson had had his machine switched off they could not know. But just before the click they could hear Kuznetsov begin to say: I am sure the president will not be . . .

'I don't follow,' said Fields.

'It's hideously simple, Gracie. I translated that Black Manifesto myself. Through the night, back at Vauxhall Cross. It was I who translated the phrase "*vozrozhdeniye vo slavu russkogo naroda*" as "the rebirth to glory of the Russian nation". Because that's what it means.'

'Marchbanks read it. He must have mentioned the phrase to the editor, who used it to Jefferson. He liked the imagery so he produced it back to Komarov last night. The bastard found himself listening to his own language. And I've never heard that phrase used before.'

Fields reached across and replayed the passage. When Jefferson had finished, Kuznetsov translated into Russian. For 'rebirth to glory' he used the Russian words *vozrozhdeniye vo slavu*.

'Jesus Christ,' muttered Fields, 'Komarov must have thought Jefferson had seen the whole document, read it in Russian. He must have jumped to the conclusion Jefferson was one of us, come to test him out. Do you think the Black Guards did it?'

'No, I think Grishin called up a contract hit from his underworld contacts. A very quick job. If they'd had

more time they'd have snatched him from the street and questioned him at leisure. They were told to silence him and get that tape back.'

'So, Jock, what are you going to do now?'

'Head back to London. The gloves are off. We know and Komarov knows we know. The chief said he wanted proof it was no forgery. Three men have now died for that satanic document. I don't know how much more bloody proof he wants.'

SAN JOSE, NOVEMBER 1988

Silicon Valley really is a valley, running along a line between the Santa Cruz mountains to the west and the Hamilton range to the east. It stretches from Santa Clara to Menlo Park, which were its limits in 1988. Since then it has spread.

The nickname comes from an amazing concentration of between 1,000 and 2,000 industries and research foundations, all dedicated to the highest of high technology.

The international scientific conference of November 1988 was held in the valley's principal city, San Jose, once a small Spanish mission town, now a sprawling conurbation of gleaming towers. The eight members of the Soviet delegation were quartered in the San Jose Fairmont. Jason Monk was in the lobby when they checked in.

The basic eight were escorted by a much bigger phalanx of minders. Some were from the Soviet embassy in New York, one from the consulate in San Francisco and four had come in from Moscow. Monk sat over a cup of iced tea, tweed-jacketed with a copy of *New Scientist* beside him, playing spot-the-hood. There were five in all, clearly the protectors from the KGB.

Before coming, Monk had had a long session with a top nuclear physicist from the Lawrence Livermore Lab. The man was ecstatic at the chance of meeting at last the Soviet physicist Professor Blinov.

'You have to realize, this guy is an enigma. He really came to prominence over the past ten years,' the boffin at Livermore had told him. 'We began to hear rumours of him on the scientific circuit about that far back. He was first a star inside the USSR, but nothing he wrote would the spooks let him publish abroad.'

'We know he got the Lenin Prize, along with a host of awards. He must have got a rack of invitations to speak abroad – hell we sent him two – but we had to write to the Praesidium of the Academy of Sciences. They always said "Forget it".'

'He's made a huge contribution and I guess he must have wanted international recognition – we're all human – so it was probably the academy turning down the invitations. And now he's coming. He'll be lecturing on advanced particle physics, and I'll be there.'

So will I, thought Monk.

He waited until after the scientist had made his speech. It was warmly applauded. In the auditorium Monk listened to the addresses and circulated in the coffee-breaks and thought they might all as well be talking Martian. He did not understand a word.

In the lobby of the hotel he became a familiar sight with his tweed jacket, eye-glasses hanging on a cord round his neck and a handful of hyper-technical magazines. Even the four KGB and one GRU officers had stopped studying him.

On the last night before the Soviet delegation headed home, Monk waited until Professor Blinov had retired to his room before knocking on the door.

'Yes,' said a voice in English.

'Room service,' said Monk.

The door opened as far as the chain would allow. Professor Blinov peered out. He saw a man in a suit holding a bowl with a display of fruit topped with a pink ribbon.

'I did not order room service.'

'No, sir. I am the night manager. This is with the manager's compliments.'

and rubbed his eyes. Slowly two tears welled up and trickled down his cheeks.

'I have a son,' he whispered. 'Dear God, I have a son.'

Monk took a photograph from his pocket and held it out. The boy wore a baseball cap high on his head and a wide grin. There were freckles and a chipped tooth.

'Ivan Ivanovich Blinov,' said Monk. 'He's never seen you, just a faded photograph from Sochi. But he loves you.'

'I have a son,' repeated the man who could design hydrogen bombs.

'You also have a wife,' murmured Monk.

Blinov shook his head. 'Valya died of cancer last year.'

Monk's heart sank. He was a free man. He would want to stay in the States. That was not the game-plan. Blinov pre-empted him.

'What do you want?'

'Two years from now, we want you to accept a lecture invitation in the West and stay here. We will fly you to the States, wherever you are. Life will be very good. A senior professorship at a major university, a large house in the woods, two cars. And Zhenya and Ivan with you. For ever. They both love you very much and I think you love them.'

'Two years.'

'Yes, two years more at Arzamas-16. But we need to know it all. You understand?'

Blinov nodded. Before dawn Monk had caused him to memorize the address in East Berlin and accept the can of shaving-foam with, somewhere in the midst of the aerosol, the small vial of invisible ink for his one single letter. There could be no question of penetrating Arzamas-16. There would have to be one meeting and handover, and a year later the escape with everything he could bring.

As he walked out into the lobby, a small voice inside Jason Monk said: You are a grade A ratfink. You should have let him stay here, now. Another voice said: You are not a family reunification charity. You are a

servant of the Foreign Office in King Charles Street.

As Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Reginald Parfitt was not only a colleague of the chief of SIS but one of the so-called Five Wise Men who, with his opposite numbers in Treasury, Defence, Cabinet Office and Home Office, would offer their recommendation to the Prime Minister for the chief's successor. Both men went back a long way, both had a friendly relationship and both were acutely aware that they ruled over quite different constituencies.

'This damn document your chaps brought out of Russia last month,' said Parfitt.

'The Black Manifesto.'

'Yes. Good title. Your idea, Henry?'

'My station chief in Moscow. Seemed pretty apposite.'

'Absolutely. Black is not the word. Well, we've shared it with the Americans, but no-one else. And it's been as high as it can go. Our own lord and master' – he meant the British Foreign Secretary – 'saw it before he went off to the pleasures of Tuscany for his holidays. So has the American Secretary of State. Needless to say, the revolution has been universal.'

'Are we going to react, Reggie?'

'React. Ah, yes, well now', there's the problem. Governments react officially to governments, not foreign opposition politicians. Officially, this document,' – he tapped the Foreign Office copy of the manifesto on his blotter – 'almost certainly does not exist, despite the fact we both know it does.'

'Officially, we are hardly in possession of it, seeing as it was undoubtedly stolen. I'm afraid the received wisdom is that officially there is nothing either government can do.'

'That's officially,' murmured Henry Coombs. 'But our government, in its no doubt infinite wisdom, employs my service precisely in order to be able to act, should occasion require, unofficially.'

'To be sure, Henry, to be sure. And no doubt you

'active measure' to prevent the onward march of Igor Viktorovich Komarov.

VLADIMIR, JULY 1989

The American academic Dr Philip Peters had already entered the USSR once, ostensibly to indulge his harmless passion for the study of oriental art and Old Russian antiquities. Nothing had happened, not an eyebrow had been raised.

Twelve months later even more tourists were pouring into Moscow and the controls were even more relaxed. The question before Monk was whether to use Dr Peters again. He decided he would.

The letter from Professor Blinov was quite clear. He had secured a rich harvest covering all the scientific questions to which the USA wanted the answers. This list had been prepared after intensive discussions with the highest levels of American academia even before Monk had confronted the professor in his room at the Fairmont, and Ivan Blinov had taken it with him. Now he was prepared to deliver. His problem was, it would be hard for him to get to Moscow. And suspicious.

But because Gorky was another city stuffed with scientific institutions, and only ninety minutes by train from Arzamas-16, he could get there. After personal protests, the KGB had lifted his habitual 'tail' whenever he left the nuclear research zone. After all, he reasoned, he had been to California. Why not Gorky? In this he was supported by the political commissar. Without surveillance he could take a further train to the cathedral city of Vladimir. But that was it. He would have to be home by nightfall. He named 19 July as the day and the rendezvous as beneath the west gallery of the cathedral of the Assumption at noon.

Monk studied the city of Vladimir for two weeks. It is a medieval city famed for two magnificent cathedrals.

'Aren't we all?'

'I have something for you.'

'And I have something for you. A long letter from Zhenya. Another from little Ivan, with some drawings he did at school. By the way, he must have inherited your brains. His math teacher says he is way ahead of his class.'

Frightened though he was, with sweat beading his forehead, the scientist beamed with pleasure.

'Follow me slowly,' said Monk, 'and keep looking at the paintings.'

He moved away but in a manner so as to be able to cover the whole vault. One group of French tourists left, and they were alone. He gave the professor the package of letters he had brought from America, and a second tasking list prepared by the nuclear physicists there. It went inside Blinov's jacket pocket. What he had for Monk was much bulkier - a one-inch-thick sheaf of documents he had copied in Arzamas-16.

Monk did not like it, but there was nothing for it; he stuffed the lot down his shirt and worked the sheaf round to the back. He shook hands and smiled.

'Courage, Ivan Yevdokimovich, not long now. One more year.'

The two men parted, Blinov returned to Gorky and thence back to his gilded cage, Monk to catch the return train to Moscow. He was back in bed, his consignment deposited with the the US embassy, before the coach returned from Zagorsk. Everyone was very sympathetic and told him he had missed the treat of a lifetime.

On 20 July the group flew out of Moscow for New York over the Pole. That same night another jet flew into Kennedy, but it came from Rome. It bore Aldrich Ames, returning after three years in Italy to resume spying for the KGB in Langley. He was already richer by two million dollars.

Before leaving Rome he had memorized and burned

a nine-page tasking letter from Moscow. Primary among the tasks was to discover any more agents being run by the CIA inside the USSR, with an accent on any KGB, GRU, senior civil servants or scientists. There was a postscript. Concentrate on the man we know as Jason Monk.

CHAPTER NINE

August is not a good month for the gentlemen's clubs of St James's, Piccadilly and Pall Mall. It is the month of holidays, when most of the staff wish to be away with their families and half the members are at their places in the country or abroad.

Many clubs close and those members who stay on in the capital for whatever reason find they have to bunk up in strange surroundings as a patchwork quilt of bilateral treaties enables members of the closed clubs to wine and dine at the few that remain open. But by the last day of the month White's was open again and it was there that Sir Henry Coombs invited to lunch a man fifteen years his senior and one of his predecessors in the post of chief of the Secret Intelligence Service.

At seventy-four Sir Nigel Irvine had been out of harness for fifteen years. The first ten of those he had spent as 'something in the City', meaning that like others before or since he had parlayed his experience of the world, his knowledge of the corridors of power and his natural astuteness into a series of directorships that had enabled him to put something by for his old age.

Four years before the lunch date he had finally retired to his home near Swanage on the Isle of Purbeck in the county of Dorset, where he wrote, read, walked the wild shoreline overlooking the English Channel and occasionally came by train to London to see old friends. Those same friends, and some much younger ones, reckoned he was still spry and active, and his mild blue eyes hid a mind as sharp as a razor.

Those who knew him best of all were aware that the old-fashioned courtesy he demonstrated to all he met dissimulated a steely will that could on occasion turn to utter ruthlessness. Henry Coombs, despite the age gap, knew him pretty well.

They both came from the tradition of Russia specialists. After Irvine's retirement the chieftaincy of SIS had fallen to two orientalist and an Arabist in turn before Henry Coombs marked a return to one of those who had cut his teeth in the struggle against the Soviet Union. When Nigel Irvine had been the chief, Coombs had proved himself a brilliant operator in Berlin, pitting his cunning against the KGB's East German network and the East Germans' own spymaster Marcus Wolf.

Irvine was content to let the conversation remain at the level of smalltalk in the crowded downstairs bar, but he would have been less than human not to wonder why his former protégé had asked him to make the train journey from Dorset to a steamy London for a single lunch. It was not until they had adjourned upstairs to a window table overlooking St James's Street that Coombs mentioned the purpose of his invitation.

'Something happening in Russia,' he said.

'Rather a lot, and all of it bad, from what the newspapers tell me,' said Irvine. Coombs smiled. He knew his old chief had sources far better than the morning papers.

'I won't go into it in depth,' he said. 'Not here, not now. Just the outline.'

'Of course,' said Irvine.

Coombs gave him a sketchy outline of the events of the past six weeks, in Moscow and in London. Notably in London.

'They're not going to do anything about it and that's final,' he said. 'Events must take their course, lamentable though they may be. That, at any rate, is how our esteemed Foreign Secretary put it to me a couple of days ago.'

'I fear you much overestimate me if you think I can do anything to put some dynamism into the mandarins of King Charles Street,' said Sir Nigel. 'I'm old and retired. As the poet put it, all races run, all passion spent.'

'I have two documents I'd like you to have a look at,' said Coombs. 'One is the full report of everything that

happened, so far as we can discern it, from the moment a brave if stupid old man stole a file from the desk of Komarov's personal secretary. You can judge for yourself whether our decision that the Black Manifesto is genuine is one with which you can agree.'

'And the other?'

'The manifesto itself'

'Thank you for the confidence. What am I supposed to do with them?'

'Take them home, read them both, see what you think.'

As the empty bowls of rice pudding laced with jam were taken away, Sir Henry Coombs ordered coffee and two glasses of the Club's vintage port, a particularly fine Fonseca.

'And even if I agree with all you say, the dreadfulness of the manifesto and the probability it is true, what then?'

'I was wondering, Nigel . . . those people I believe you are going to see in America next week . . .'

'Dear me, Henry, even you are not supposed to know about that.'

Coombs shrugged dismissively, but privately he was glad his hunch had worked. The Council ~~would~~ be meeting and Irvine would be part of it.

'In the time-honoured phrase, ~~my spies are~~ everywhere.'

'Then I'm heartened things haven't changed so much since my day,' said Irvine. 'I ~~shall~~ ~~be~~ am meeting some people in America ~~very soon~~'

'I leave it to you. Your judgment. ~~They will be~~ documents should be ~~burned~~ ~~in~~ small ashes. If you think ~~they should be~~ ~~burned~~ your choice.'

'Dear me, how very ~~interesting~~'

Coombs produced a ~~case~~ case and handed it over ~~to him~~ with the purchases he ~~had~~ had made. ~~There were~~ tapestry blanks for ~~the~~ cushion covers on ~~the~~

They parted in the lobby and Sir Nigel Irvine took a taxi to the station to catch his train back to Dorset.

LANGLEY, SEPTEMBER 1989

When Aldrich Ames moved back to Washington, his nine-year career as a spy for the KGB still had an amazing four and a half years yet to run.

Rolling in money, he began his new life by buying a half-million-dollar house for cash and tooling into the car park in a brand new Jaguar. This on a \$50,000-a-year salary. No-one noticed anything odd.

Because he had been running the Soviet desk at the Rome mission, and despite the fact that Rome came under Western Europe, Ames himself had remained part of the crucial SE Division. From the KGB's point of view it was vital that he remain where, with the right access, he might once again look at the 301 files.

In this he had a major problem. Milton Bearden had also just returned to Langley, having supervised the covert war against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

The first thing he did as new head of the SE Division was try to get rid of Ames. In this, like others before him, he was frustrated.

Ken Mulgrew, the quintessential bureaucrat, had risen through the non-operational side of the hierarchy to a post that put him in charge of Personnel. As such, he was highly influential in staff allocations and postings.

He and Ames quickly resumed their boozy friendship, with Ames able now to afford nothing but the best. It was Mulgrew who frustrated Bearden by keeping Ames inside the SE Division.

In the interim, the CIA had computerized masses of its most covert files, confiding its innermost secrets to the most insecure tool ever invented. In Rome Ames had made a point of educating himself to become computer-literate. All he needed were the access codes to be able to tap into the 301 files without even leaving his desk. No more plastic shopping bags full of paperwork would

ever be necessary. Nor would it ever be required of him to draw and sign for the most secret files.

The first slot Mulgrew managed to fix for his pal was that of European chief of the Soviet Division's external operations group. But external ops only handled Soviet assets who were outside the USSR or the Soviet bloc. These did not include Lysander, the Spartan fighter, who was in East Berlin running the KGB's Directorate K, or Orion, the hunter, inside the Soviet Defence Ministry in Moscow. Delphi, the oracle, was in the highest reaches of Moscow's Foreign Ministry and the fourth, the one who wanted to fly the Atlantic, code-named Pegasus, was in a sealed nuclear research facility between Moscow and the Urals.

When Ames used his position rapidly to check on Jason Monk, who now outranked him as a GS-15, while Ames was still stuck at GS-14, nothing came up. But even the absence of any references to Monk in external ops told him one thing: anybody run by Monk was inside the USSR. Scuttlebutt and Mulgrew told him the rest.

The word around the office was that Jason Monk was the best, the last great hope in the division. The word also said he was a loner, a maverick, who worked his own way, took his own risks and would long ago have been elbowed except for one thing: he got results in an organization that was steadily getting less and less.

Like any paper-pusher, Mulgrew resented Monk. He resented his independence, his refusal to file forms in triplicate and, most of all, his seeming immunity to the complaints of people like Mulgrew.

Ames played upon this resentment. Of the two of them Ames had the better head for drink. It was he who could keep thinking despite the fumes of alcohol, while Mulgrew became boastful and loose-tongued.

Thus it was that one late night in September 1989, when the subject had once again come round to the lone Virginian, Mulgrew blurted out that he had heard Monk ran an agent who was 'some bigwig

ted a couple of years ago in Argentina'.
was no name and no code-name. But the KGB
ork out the rest. 'Bigwig' would indicate a man
nd secretary rank or up. For 'a couple of years
ey fixed on a period from eighteen months back
ee years.
ecks with Foreign Ministry postings to Buenos
s culled a list of seventeen possibles. Ames's tip that
man had not been reposted abroad cut the list to
ve.

Unlike the CIA, the KGB's counter-intelligence arm
d no squeamishness. They began looking at sudden
ccess to money, an improved lifestyle, even the
urchase of a small apartment . . .

It was a fine day, that first of September, with a breeze
off the Channel and nothing between the cliffs and the
far coast of Normandy but wind-tossed white-capped
waves.

Sir Nigel strode the clifftop path between Durlston
Head and St Alban's Head and drank in the salt-tanged
air. It was his favourite walk, had been for years, and a
tonic after smoky boardrooms or a night of studying
classified documents.

He found it cleared his head, concentrated the mind,
blew away the irrelevant and the deliberately deceivin
brought into focus the essential core of a problem.

He had spent the night bent over the two docume
given him by Henry Coombs and he had been shock
by what he read. The detective-work that had b
carried out since Miss Stone had seen a tramp to
something through her car window met with
approval. It was the way he would have done it.

He recalled Jock Macdonald vaguely, a young
running errands at Century House. Obviously
come a long way. And he was convinced by th
clusion: the Black Manifesto was neither fore
joke.

That brought him to the manifesto itself. If the Russian demagogue really intended to carry out that programme, something would happen that took him back to a hideous memory from his youth.

He was eighteen when, in 1943, he had at last been accepted into the British Army, and posted to Italy. Wounded in the big push on Monte Cassino, he had been invalided back to Britain and on recovery, despite pleas to rejoin a combat unit, had been posted to military intelligence.

It was as a lieutenant just turned twenty that he had crossed the Rhine with the Eighth Army and come across something no-one of that age, or indeed of any age, should be forced to look at. He was summoned by a shocked infantry major to come and look at something the infantry had found in their path. The concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen left older men than him with nightmares they would never shake off.

He turned back inland at St Alban's head, following the track to the hamlet of Acton where he would turn again and follow the lane to Langton Matravers. What to do? And with what chance of having any effect at all? Burn them now and be done with it all? Tempting, very tempting. Or take them to America and perhaps risk ridicule from the patriarchs with whom he would spend a week? Intimidating.

He unlatched the garden gate and crossed the small patch where Penny grew fruit and vegetables in summer. There was a bonfire, some cuttings smouldering away. But at the heart the embers were hot and red. So easy to stuff the two files into the fire and be done with it all.

Henry Coombs, he knew, would never mention the subject again, never ask what he did or seek any progress report. Indeed, no-one would ever know from whence the documents had come, for neither man would ever talk. It was part of the code. His wife called from the kitchen window.

'There you are! Tea's in the sitting-room. I went into the village and got muffins and jam.'

'Good, love muffins.'

'I should know by now.'

Five years his junior, Penelope Irvine had once been a raging beauty, sought after by a dozen richer men. For reasons of her own she had chosen the impecunious young intelligence officer who read her poetry and hid behind a shy exterior a brain like a computer.

There had been a son, just the one, their only child, long gone, fallen in the Falklands in 1982. They tried not to think too much about him, except on his birthday and the date of his death.

Through thirty years of the Secret Service she had patiently waited for her husband while he ran his agents deep inside the USSR or waited in the bitter chill of the shadows of the Berlin Wall for some brave but frightened man to shuffle through the checkpoint to the lights of West Berlin. When he came home, the fire was always burning and there were muffins for tea. At seventy-four, he still thought she was beautiful and loved her very much.

He sat and munched his snack and stared at the fire.

'You're going away again,' she said quietly.

'I think I must.'

'How long?'

'Oh, a few days in London to prepare, then America for a week. After that, I don't know. Probably not again.'

'Well, I'll be all right. Plenty to do in the garden. You'll ring when you can?'

'Of course.'

Then he said. 'It mustn't happen again, you know.'

'Of course not. Now finish your tea.'

LANGLEY, MARCH 1990

It was the CIA's Moscow station that sounded the first alarm. Agent Delphi had switched off. Since the previous December, Jason Monk sat at his desk and pored over the cable traffic as it was decrypted and brought to him. At first he was worried, later frantic.

If Kruglov was still all right, he was breaking all the rules. Why? Twice the Moscow-based CIA had made the appropriate chalk marks in the appropriate places to indicate they had filled a 'drop' with something for Delphi and that he should service that hiding-place. Twice the alerts had been ignored. Was he out of town, suddenly posted abroad?

If so, then he should have given the standard reassuring 'I'm OK' sign of life. They scoured the usual magazines, looking for the agreed small ad that would constitute an 'I'm OK' message or the opposite: 'I'm in trouble, help me.' But there was nothing.

By March it was looking as if Delphi was either completely incapacitated by heart attack, other illness or serious accident. Or dead. Or 'taken'.

For Monk, with his suspicious mind, there was an unanswered question. If Kruglov had been taken and interrogated, he would have told all. To resist was futile, it simply prolonged the pain.

Therefore he would have given away the places of the dead-letter boxes and the coded chalk marks that alerted the CIA to the need to pick up a package of information.

Why did the KGB not then use those chalk marks to catch an American diplomat red-handed? It would have been the obvious thing to do. A triumph for Moscow when they really needed one, for everything else was going America's way.

The Soviet empire in Eastern Europe was coming apart. Romania had assassinated the dictator Ceausescu; Poland was gone, Czechoslovakia and Hungary in open revolt, the Berlin Wall torn down the previous November. To catch an American in red-handed espionage in Moscow would have done something to offset the stream of humiliations the KGB was undergoing. And yet nothing.

For Monk it meant one of two things. Either Kruglov's complete disappearance was an accident that would be explained later or the KGB was protecting a source.

The United States is a land rich in many things, and not least of these are non-governmental organizations, known as NGOs. There are thousands of them. They range from trusts to endowments for research into countless subjects, some of them mind-numbing obscurity. There are centres for policy study, think-tanks, groups for the promotion of this and that, councils for the advancement of whatever and foundations almost too numerous to list.

Some are dedicated to research, some to charity, some to discussion; others devote themselves to single-issue propaganda, lobbying, publicity, the enhancement of public awareness of this or the abolition of the other.

Washington alone plays host to 1,200 NGOs, and New York has a thousand more. And they all have funds. Some are funded, in part at least, by tax dollars, others by bequests from those long dead, some by private industry and commerce, others by quixotic, philanthropic or just lunatic millionaires.

They provide roosts for academics, politicians, ex-ambassadors, do-gooders, busybodies and the occasional maniac. But they all have two things in common. They admit they exist and somewhere have a headquarters. All except one.

Perhaps because of its tiny and closed membership, the quality of that membership and its utter invisibility, the Council of Lincoln that summer of 1999 was probably the most influential of all.

In a democracy power is influence. Only in the dictatorships can raw power – to arrest, detain, sequester, torture, try, condemn and imprison in secret – exist within the law.

Non-elected power in a democracy therefore lies in the ability to influence the elected machine. This may be achieved by the mobilization of public opinion, campaigns in the media, persistent lobbying or straight financial contributions. But in its purest form such influ-

ence may simply be quiet advice to the holders of elected office from a source of unchallenged experience, integrity and wisdom. It is called 'the quiet word'.

The invisible Council of Lincoln, denying its own existence, was a self-sustaining group dedicated to the contemplation of issues of moment, evaluation and discussion and a final agreement on a resolution. Based upon the quality of its membership and the ability of those members to have access to the very pinnacles of elected office, the Council probably had more real influence than any other NGO or a raft of them put together.

Its character was Anglo-American and its origins were in that deep sense of partnership in adversity that goes back to the First World War, although the Council only came into being in the early eighties as a result of a dinner in an exclusive Washington club just after the Falklands War.

Membership was by invitation only and confined to those felt by the other members to be possessed of certain qualities. Among these were long experience, utter probity, sagacity, complete discretion and proven patriotism.

That apart, those who had served in public office had to be retired from that office so that there could be no question of special pleading, while those in the private sector could remain at the helms of their corporations. Not all members were privately rich by any means, but two at least in the private sector were estimated to be personally worth a billion dollars.

The private sector covered experience in commerce, industry, banking, finance and science, while the public sector included statesmanship, diplomacy and the civil service.

In the summer of 1999 there were six British members, including one woman, and thirty-four Americans, including five women.

By nature of the experience of the world that they were expected to bring to the collegial discussions, they tended to be middle-aged to elderly. Few had less

sixty years' experience of life and the oldest was a very fit eighty-one.'

The Council was not named after the British city of that name but after America's greatest president, and the ethos of the Council was to be found in his words, that 'government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.'

It met once a year, by agreement reached in harmless-sounding telephone calls, and in a place of great privacy. In each case the host was one of the wealthier members, who never declined the honour. Members paid their own way to an agreed rendezvous point, after which they became the guests of their host.

In the north-western corner of the state of Wyoming there is a valley known simply as Jackson Hole, named after the first trapper to have the grit to overwinter there. Bordered on the west by the towering Tetons and on the east by the Gros Ventre Range, the valley is sealed in the north by Yellowstone Park. To the south the mountains converge and the Snake River rushes out between them in a canyon of white water.

North of the small ski-town of Jackson, the Highway 191 runs clear up to Moran Junction past the airport and then on to the Yellowstone. Just beyond the airport is the village of Moose, where a smaller road branches off to take visitors up to Jenny Lake.

West of that highway, in the very foothills of the Tetons, are two lakes: Bradley Lake, served by the torrent of Garnet Canyon, and Taggart Lake, served by Avalanche Canyon. Except to trail hikers, the lakes are inaccessible. On the land between the two lakes, a tract backed by the vertical wall of the South Teton, a Washington-based financier called Saul Nathanson had built a hundred-acre vacation ranch.

Its situation granted absolute privacy to the owner and any guests. The land stretched from lake to lake on each side, with the sheer mountain behind. At the front the public trails ran below the level of the ranch, which itself was on a raised plateau.

On 7 September the first guests arrived by agreement at Denver, Colorado, where they were met by Nathanson's private Grumman and transported over the mountains to Jackson airport. Far away from the terminal, they transferred to his helicopter for the five-minute lift to the ranch. The British contingent had passed the entry procedures on the East Coast, so they too did not need to go near the terminal at Denver, but could change planes far from prying eyes.

There were twenty cabins at the ranch, each with two bedrooms and a communal sitting-room. The weather being warm and sunny, with a chill only after sundown, many guests chose to sit on the verandah in front of each cabin.

Food, and it was exquisite, was served in the single large lodge that formed the focal point of the complex. After meals the tables were cleared and rearranged to permit plenum conferences.

The staff were Nathanson's own, utterly discreet, and brought in for the event. For added security, private guards posing as campers surrounded the ranch on the lower slopes to turn back any stray hikers.

The 1999 conference of the Council of Lincoln lasted five days, and when it was over no-one knew that the guests had come, stayed and gone.

On his first afternoon, Sir Nigel Irvine unpacked, showered, changed into slacks and a twill shirt and went to sit on the timber deck in front of the cabin he would share with a former US Secretary of State.

From his vantage-point he could see some of his fellow guests stretching their legs. There were pleasant walks between the clumps of fir, birch and lodgepole pine, and a path down to the edge of each lake.

He caught sight of the former British Foreign Secretary and ex-Secretary-General of NATO, Lord Carrington, a spare, bird-like figure walking with the banker Charles Price, one of the most popular and successful of American ambassadors ever to be sent to the Court of St James. Irvine had been chief of Secret

Intelligence when Peter Carrington had been at the Foreign Office and therefore his boss. The six-foot-four-inch American towered over the British peer. Further over, their host Saul Nathanson sat on a bench in the sun with American investment banker and former Attorney-General Elliot Richardson.

To one side Lord Armstrong, former Cabinet Secretary and head of the Home Civil Service, was knocking on the door of the cabin where Lady Thatcher was still unpacking.

Another helicopter clattered in towards the landing pad to deposit former President George Bush, who was met by ex-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. At one of the tables close to the central lodge a pinafores waitress brought a pot of tea to another former ambassador, the British Sir Nicholas Henderson, who shared his table and his tea with London financier and banker Sir Evelyn de Rothschild.

Nigel Irvine glanced at his schedule for the five-day conference. There would be nothing that night. On the next day the membership would as usual break into its three committees, geo-political, strategic and economic. They would meet separately for two days. The third would be dedicated to hearing the results of their deliberations and discussing them. Day Four would be for plenary sessions. He had been allocated an hour, at his own request, towards the end of that day. The last day would be consigned to Further Action and Recommendations.

In the dense forests along the slopes of the Tetons a lone bull moose, sensing the coming time of the rut, bellowed for a mate. On dark-tipped wings an osprey drifted over the Snake, mewing in anger as a bald eagle invaded his fishing ground. It was, thought the old spymaster, an idyllic spot, marred only by the black evil in the document he had brought with him from a desktop in Russia.

VIENNA, JUNE 1990

The previous December Ames's job with external ops of the Soviet Division had been phased out. Once again he was at a loose end and as far from the 301 files as ever.

Then Ames landed his third job since returning from Rome. It was as branch chief for Czech operations. But it did not authorize the computer-access codes to unlock the secret heart of the 301 files – the section containing the descriptions of CIA assets working inside the Soviet bloc.

Ames protested to Mulgrew. It was unreasonable, he argued. He had once headed the entire counter-intelligence desk for that very section. Moreover, he needed to cross-check for CIA assets who, although Russian, had worked in Czechoslovakia in their careers. Mulgrew promised to help if he could.

In May Mulgrew gave his friend the access code. From then on, at his desk in Czech Section, Ames could surf the files until he came up with 'Monk – Assets'.

In June 1990 Ames flew to Vienna for another meeting with 'Vlad', aka Colonel Vladimir Mechulayev. Since his return to Washington it had been deemed unsafe for him to meet any more Soviet diplomats, owing to the danger of FBI surveillance. So Vienna it was.

At the meeting he became so drunk that although a further get-together was fixed for October, also in Vienna, he got the cities muddled up and flew to Zurich instead.

But in June he remained sober long enough to take possession of a huge block of cash, and to make Mechulayev ecstatic. He brought with him three descriptions.

One was of a colonel of the army, probably GRU, now in the Defence Ministry in Moscow but recruited in the Middle East in late 1985. Another was of a scientist who lived in a top-security sealed city but had been recruited in California. The third was of a Colonel of the KGB, recruited outside the USSR, on the books for the next

six years, now inside the Soviet bloc but not in the USSR, who spoke Spanish.

Within three days, back at the First Chief Directorate's head-quarters building at Yazenevo, the hunt was on.

'Do you not hear her voice upon the night-wind, my brothers and sisters? Do you not hear her calling to you? Can you, her children, not hear the voice of our beloved Mother Russia?

'But I can hear her, my friends. I hear her sighs through the forests, I hear her sobs across the snows. Why are you doing this to me? she asked. Have I not been betrayed enough? Have I not bled enough for you? Have I not suffered enough, that you should do this to me?

'Why do you sell me like a whore into the hands of foreigners and strangers, who pick upon my aching body as carrion crows . . . ?'

The screen erected at the end of the huge communal lodge that formed the main conference centre of the ranch was the largest available. The projector stood at the back of the hall.

Forty pairs of eyes were riveted upon the image of the man addressing a mass rally at Tukhovo earlier that summer as the sonorous Russian oratory rose and fell, the voice of the interpreter, dubbed onto the soundtrack, a subdued counterpoint.

'Yes, my brothers, yes, my sisters, we can hear her. The men of Moscow with their fur coats and their doxies cannot hear her. The foreigners and the criminal scum who feast upon her body cannot hear her. But we can hear our mother calling to us in her pain, for we are the people of the Great Land.'

The young film-maker Litvinov had done a brilliant job. Into the film he had inserted cutaways of moving pathos: a young blonde mother, her baby at her breast, gazing adoringly upwards towards the podium; a

desperately handsome soldier with tears trickling down his cheeks; a seamed labourer from the land, his scythe across his shoulder, the price of years of hard toil bitten into his face.

None could know that the cutaway shots had been filmed separately, using actors. Not that the crowd was faked; from a high elevation other shots revealed 10,000 supporters, rank upon rank, flanked by the uniformed cheerleaders of the Young Combatants.

Igor Komarov dropped his voice from a roar to something little above a whisper, but the microphones caught it and brought it across the stadium.

'Will no-one come? Will no-one step forward to say: Enough, it shall not happen. Patience, my brothers of Russia, wait a little more, daughters of the *rodina* . . .'

The voice rose again, moving up through the scales from a murmur to a cry. 'For I am coming, dear Mother, yes, I, Igor, your son, am coming . . .'

The final word was almost lost as the rally rose in unison to the prompted chant: KO-MA-ROV, KO-MA-ROV.

The projector was switched off and the image faded. There was a pause and then a collective exhalation of breath.

As the lights went up, Nigel Irvine moved to the head of the long rectangular refectory table of Wyoming pine.

'I think you know what you have seen,' he said quietly. 'That was Igor Viktorovich Komarov, leader of the Union of Patriotic Forces, the party most likely to win the elections in January and project Mr Komarov into the presidency.'

'As you will have seen, he is an orator of rare power and passion and clearly has enormous charisma.'

'You will know also that in Russia already, 80 per cent of the real power lies in the hands of the president. Since the time of Yeltsin the checks and curbs on that power, such as obtain in our societies, have been abolished. A Russian president today can govern more or less as he likes and bring in, by decree, any law he likes. That could

well include the restoration of a one-party state.' 'Seeing the state they are in at the moment, is that such a bad idea?' asked a former US ambassador to the United Nations.

'Perhaps not, ma'am,' said Irvine. 'But I did not ask for this presentation to discuss the possible course of events after the election of Igor Komarov but rather to present the Council with what I believe to be some hard evidence as to that course, and the nature it will take. I have brought from England two reports, and here in Wyoming, using the office copier, have run off thirty-nine copies of each.'

'I wondered why I needed to call in so much paper,' said their host, Saul Nathanson, with a grin.

'I am sorry to have worn out your machine, Saul. Anyway, I did not wish to carry forty copies of each document across the Atlantic. I will not ask you to read them now but to take a copy of each and read them in privacy. Please read the report marked "Verification" first, and the Black Manifesto second.'

'Finally, I should tell you that three men have died already because of what you are about to read tonight. Both documents are so deeply classified that I must ask they all be returned for destruction by fire before I leave this compound.'

All levity had vanished as the members of the Council of Lincoln took their copies and retired to their rooms. To the bewilderment of the catering staff, no-one appeared for supper. Meals were asked for and served in the cabins.

LANGLEY, AUGUST 1990

The news from the CIA stations inside the Soviet bloc was bad and getting worse. By July it was clear that something had happened to Orion, the hunter.

The previous week he had failed to show up for a routine brush-pass, something he had never failed to do before.

A brush-pass is a simple device that normally compromises nobody. At a given moment, by pre-agreement, one of the parties walks down a street. He may be followed, he may not. Without warning he swings off the pavement and into the door of a café or restaurant. Any crowded place will do. Just before he enters, the other man has paid his bill, risen and is walking towards the door. Without making any eye contact they brush against each other. A hand slips a package no larger than a matchbox into the side pocket of the other. Both continue on their way, one in, the other out. If there is a 'tail', by the time the followers swing through the door there is nothing to see.

Apart from this, Colonel Solomin had failed to service two dead drops despite clear chalk-mark warnings that there was something for him in them.

The only inference was that Orion had switched off or been switched off by someone else. Again, the emergency sign-of-life procedure had not been operated. Whatever had happened was instant, without warning. Heart attack, auto crash or arrest.

From West Berlin came the news that the regular monthly letter to the East German safe house had not been received from Pegasus. Nor had anything appeared in the Russian dog-breeders' magazine.

With Professor Blinov's increasing ability to travel locally inside Russia away from Arzamas-16, Monk had suggested he send a completely harmless letter once a month to a safe East Berlin postal address. It did not even need any secret writing on it, just the signature Yuri. He could drop the letter into a box anywhere outside the sealed complex, and it would never be traced back to him even if intercepted.

With the Berlin Wall in pieces, the old trick of smuggling the letter through to the West was no longer necessary. To add to this, Blinov had been advised to purchase a mated pair of spaniels. This had been much approved of inside Arzamas-16, for what could be more harmless for the widowed academic than to breed

spaniels? Each month with perfect justification he could mail a small ad to the dog-breeders' weekly in Moscow notifying that there were puppies for sale, weaned, newborn or expected. The usual monthly ad had not appeared.

Monk was by now at his wits' end. He complained to the highest levels that something was wrong, but was told he had not waited long enough before showing signs of panic. He should be patient, and contact would no doubt be re-established. But he could not be patient. He began to fire off memoranda to the effect that he believed there was a leak deep inside Langley.

Two men who would have taken him seriously, Carey Jordan and Gus Hathaway, had retired. The new regime, mostly imported since the winter of 1985, were simply annoyed. In another part of the structure the official mole-hunt, dating back to the spring of 1986, crawled on.

'I find it hard to believe,' said a former US Attorney-General, as the plenary discussion opened after breakfast.

'My problem is, I find it hard not to believe,' replied Secretary of State James Baker. 'This has gone to both our governments . . . Nigel?'

'Yes.'

'And they are not going to do anything?'

The remaining thirty-nine members, grouped round the conference table, were staring at the former spymaster as if seeking some reassurance that it was just a nightmare, a figment of the dark, that would vanish in some way.

'The received wisdom,' said Irvine, 'is that officially nothing can be done. Half of what is in the Black Manifesto could well have the agreement of a good proportion of the Russian people. The West is not supposed to have it at all. Komarov would denounce it as a forgery. The effect could even be to strengthen him.'

There was a gloomy silence.

'May I say something?' said Saul Nathanson. 'Not as your host but as an ordinary member . . .

'Eight years ago I had a son. He died in the Gulf War.

There was a series of sombre nods. Twelve of those present had played leading roles in the creation of the multinational coalition that had fought the Gulf War. From the far end of the table General Colin Powell stared intently at the financier. Because of the eminence of the father, he had personally received the news that Lt 'Tim Nathanson, USAF, had been shot down in the closing hours of combat.

'If there was any comfort in that loss,' said Nathanson, 'it was to know that he died fighting against something truly evil.'

He paused, searching for words. 'I am old enough to believe in the concept of evil. And in the notion that evil can sometimes be embodied in a person. I was not old enough to fight in the Second World War. I was eight when it ended. I know some of you here were in that war. But of course I learned later. I believe Adolf Hitler was evil, and what he did also.'

There was utter silence. Statesmen, politicians, industrialists, bankers, financiers, diplomats, administrators are accustomed to address the practicalities of life. They realized they were listening to a deeply personal statement. Saul Nathanson leaned forward and tapped the Black Manifesto.

'This document is evil, the man who wrote it is evil. I do not see how we can walk away and let it happen again.'

Nothing broke the silence of the room. By 'it' everyone realized he was referring to a second Holocaust, not simply against the Jews of Russia but many other ethnic minorities. The silence was broken by the sole former British premier.

'I agree. This is no time to go wobbly.'

Three members present put their hands to their mouths. The last time she had used that phrase was in

an apartment at Aspen, Colorado, the day after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. George Bush, James Baker and Colin Powell had been there. At seventy-three she could still make her meaning extremely plain

Ralph Brooke, head of the giant Intercontinental Telecommunications Corporation, known in every stock exchange in the world as InTelCor, leaned forward.

'OK, so what *could* we do?' he asked.

'Diplomatically . . . apprise every NATO government and urge them to protest,' said a former diplomat.

'Then Komarov would denounce the manifesto as a crude forgery, and much of Russia would believe him. There is nothing new about the xenophobia of the Russians,' said another.

James Baker leaned forward to turn sideways and address Nigel Irvine.

'You brought us this appalling document,' he said. 'What do you advise?'

'I advocate nothing,' said Irvine. 'But I offer a caveat. If the Council were to sanction . . . not to undertake but to sanction . . . an initiative, it would have to be something so covert that, come what may, nothing would or could ever attach to any reputation in this room.'

Thirty-nine members of the Council knew exactly what he was talking about. Each of them had been party to, or had witnessed, supposedly covert governmental operations fail, and then unravel right up to the top.

A German-accented gravel voice came down the table from a former US Secretary of State.

'Can Nigel undertake an operation that covert?'

Two voices said 'Yes' in unison. When he had been chief of British Intelligence he had served both Margaret Thatcher and her Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington.

The Council of Lincoln never passed formal, written resolutions. It reached agreements, and on the basis of these each member then used his or her influence to further the purpose of those agreements within the corridors of power in their own countries.

In the matter of the Black Manifesto, the agreement

was simply to delegate to a smaller committee the members' desire that the committee consider what might be for the best. The full Council agreed neither to sanction nor condemn, nor even be aware of anything that might ensue.

MOSCOW, SEPTEMBER 1990

Colonel Anatoli Grishin sat at his desk in his office in Lefortovo jail and surveyed the three documents he had just received. His mind was a torrent of mixed emotions.

Topmost was triumph. Through the summer the counter-intelligence people of both First and Second Chief Directorates had delivered him the three traitors in quick succession.

First had come the diplomat, Kruglov, exposed by a combination of his First Secretaryship at the embassy in Buenos Aires and his purchase of an apartment for 20,000 roubles shortly after his return.

He had confessed everything without hesitation, babbling away to the panel of officers behind the table and the turning spools of the tape-machine. After six weeks he had nothing left to tell and had been consigned to one of the deep cells where the temperature, even in summer, rarely rose above one degree. There he sat and shivered, awaiting his fate. That fate was contained in one of the sheets on the colonel's desk.

July had brought the professor of nuclear physics to the cells. There were few enough scientists of his ilk who had ever lectured in California and the list quickly came down to four. A sudden search of Blinov's apartment at Arzamas-16 had revealed a small phial of invisible ink ill-hidden in a pair of rolled-up socks in a closet.

He, too, had confessed all and quickly, the mere sight of Grishin and his team with the tools of their trade being enough to loosen his tongue. He had even revealed the address in East Berlin to which he had written his secret letters.

The raiding of that address had been given to a colonel

of Directorate K in East Berlin, but unaccountably the tenant of the address had escaped, walking through the newly open city into the West an hour before the raid.

Last, in late July, had come the Siberian soldier, finally nailed by his rank in the GRU, his posting inside the Defence Ministry and his service in Aden, and intensive surveillance during which a raid had been made on his flat to discover that one of his children, hunting for Christmas presents, had once discovered Daddy's little camera.

Pvotr Solomin had been different, resisting amazing pain and snarling defiance through the agony. Grishin had broken him eventu-ally, he always did. It was the threat to send the wife and children to the hardest of strict-regime camps that did it.

Each of them had described how he had been approached by the smiling American, so eager to listen to their problems, so reasonable with his proposals. That caused the other emotion in Grishin's mind, sheer rage at the elusive man he now knew to be called Jason Monk.

Not once, not twice but three times this impudent bastard had simply walked into the USSR, talked to his spies and walked out again. Right under the KGB's noses. The more he knew about the man, the more he hated him.

Checks had been made, of course. The passenger list of the *Armenia* for that cruise had been gone through, but no pseudonym sprang to mind. The crew vaguely remembered an American from Texas who wore Texan clothes of the type descried by Solomin from their meeting at the botanical gardens. It was probable Monk was Norman Kelson, but not proved.

In Moscow the detectives had had more luck. Every American tourist in the capital on that day had been checked via the records of visa applications and Intourist group tours. Eventually they had homed in on the Metropol and the man who had had the so-convenient stomach upset that made him miss the Zagorsk Monastery tour. The same day that Monk had met

Professor Blinov in the cathedral in Vladimir. Dr Philip Peters, a name Grishin would remember.

When the three traitors had confessed to the panel of interrogators the full volume of what this one American had persuaded them to hand over, the KGB officers were pale with shock.

Grishin shuffled the three papers together and made a call on his office phone. He always appreciated the final penance.

General Vladimir Kryuchkov had been elevated from head of the First Chief Directorate to chairman of the whole KGB. It was he who had placed the three death warrants on the desk of Mikhail Gorbachev that morning in the president's office on the top floor of the Central Committee building in Novaya Ploshchad for signature, and he who had sent them, duly signed, to Lefortovo jail, marked 'immediate'.

The colonel allowed the condemned men thirty minutes in the rear courtyard to appreciate what was going to happen. Too sudden, and there was not time for anticipation, as he had often told his pupils. When he descended, the three men were on their knees in the gravel of the high-walled yard where the sun never shone.

The diplomat went first. He seemed traumatized, mumbling *nyet, nyet* as the master-sergeant placed the 9-mm Makarov to the back of his head. On a nod from Grishin the man squeezed the trigger. There was a flash, a spray of blood and bone and Valeri Kluglov slammed forward onto what was left of his face.

The scientist, raised a committed atheist, was praying, asking Almighty God to take his soul into safe-keeping. He hardly seemed to notice what had happened two yards from him, and went face-down like the diplomat.

Colonel Pyotr Solomin was last. He stared up at the sky, perhaps seeing for the last time the forests and waters, rich in game and fish, of his homeland. When he felt the cold steel at the back of his head, he pulled his left hand across his body and held it up towards Colonel Grishin by the wall. The middle finger was raised rigid.

'Fire!' shouted Grishin and then it was over. He ordered burial in unmarked graves, that night, in the forests outside Moscow. Even in death there must be no mercy. The families would never have a spot upon which to place their flowers.

Colonel Grishin walked over to the body of the Siberian soldier, bent over it for several seconds, then straightened up and strode away.

When he returned to his office to compile his report, the red light on his phone was flashing. The caller was a colleague he knew in the investigation group of the Second Chief Directorate.

'We think we are closing in on the fourth one,' said the man. 'It's down to two. Both Colonels, both in counter-intelligence, both in East Berlin. We have them under surveillance. Sooner or later we'll get our break. When we do, you want to know? You want to be in on the arrest?'

'Give me twelve hours,' said Grishin, 'just twelve hours and I'll be there. This one I want; this one is personal.'

Both the investigator and the interrogator knew a seasoned counter-intelligence officer would be the hardest to crack. After years on Line K, he would know how to spot counter-intelligence when directed against himself. He would leave no invisible ink in rolled-up socks, purchase no apartments.

In the old days it had been easy. If a man was suspected he was arrested and grilled until a confession was extracted or a mistake could be proved. By 1990 the authorities insisted on proof of guilt, or at least serious evidence before third degree was resorted to. Lysander would leave no evidence; he would have to be caught red-handed. It would need delicacy, and time.

Moreover, Berlin was an open city. The East was still technically the Soviet sector, but the Wall was down. If spooked, the guilty party could fly the coop so easily – a fast drive through the streets to the lights of the West and safety. Then it would be too late.

CHAPTER TEN

The project committee was confined to five. There was the chairman of the geo-political group, his opposite number in the strategic committee and the chairman of the economics body. Plus Saul Nathanson at his own request and Nigel Irvine. He was very much in the chair, the others his questioners.

'Let's get one thing straight at the outset,' Ralph Brooke of the economic committee began, 'are you contemplating an assassination of this man Komarov?'

'No.'

'Why not?'

'Because they are seldom achieved and in this case, even if achieved, it would not solve the problem.'

Irvine, better than anyone in the cabin, recalled the various attempts by the CIA, with all its funds and technology, to 'terminate' Fidel Castro. With exploding cigars that he refused to smoke, a wet-suit impregnated with poison that he declined to wear and boot polish whose fumes were supposed to make his beard drop out; the whole thing had become ridiculous. The CIA had finally resorted to commissioning the Mafia, whose efforts were even more comical. The Cosa Nostra's designated hitman, John Roselli, ended up wearing concrete boots in Florida Bay, and Castro continued to make seven-hour speeches, reason enough to assassinate him in the first place.

Charles de Gaulle had survived six attempts by the OAS, the cream of the French combat units, King Hussein of Jordan more than that and Saddam Hussein attempts too numerous to count.

'Why couldn't it be done, Nigel?'

'I didn't say couldn't. Just extremely difficult. The man is exceptionally well guarded. His personal body-guard and protection squad commander is no fool.'

'But even if it worked, it wouldn't work?'

'No. The man would be a martyr. Another would step into his shoes and sweep the country. Probably carry out the same programme, the legacy of the lost leader.'

'Then, what?'

'All practising politicians are subject to destabilization. An American word, I believe.'

There were a number of rueful grins. In its day the State Department and the CIA had sought to destabilize several left-wing foreign leaders.

'What would be required?'

'A budget.'

'No problem,' said Saul Nathanson. 'Name it.'

'Thank you. Later.'

'And?'

'Some technical back-up. Mostly purchasable. And a man.'

'What kind of man?'

'A man to go into Russia and do certain things. A very good man.'

'That's your province. If, and I say if advisedly, this man can be discredited, his popular support culled away from him, what then, Nigel?'

'Actually,' said Irvine, 'that is the principal problem. Komarov is not just a charlatan. He is skilful, passionate and charismatic. He understands and corresponds to the instincts of the Russian people. He is an icon.'

'A what?'

'An icon. Not a religious painting, but a symbol. He stands for something. All nations need something, some person or symbol, to which they can cleave, which can give a disparate mass of varied people a sense of identity and thus of unity. Without a unifying symbol, people drift into internecine feuds. Russia is vast, with many different ethnic groups. Communism was brutal, but it provided unity. Unity by coercion. So also in Yugoslavia; when it was removed we saw what happened. To achieve unity by volition, there must be that symbol. You have your Old Glory, we our Crown. At the moment Igor Komarov is

their icon, and only we know how savagely flawed.'

'And what is his game-plan?'

'Like all demagogues, he will play on their hopes, their desires, their loves and their hates, but mostly on their fears. That way he will win their hearts. With those he will get the votes and, with the votes, the power. He can then use the power to build the machine that will carry out the aims of the Black Manifesto.'

'But if he is destroyed? It's back to chaos. Even civil war.'

'Probably. Unless one could introduce into the equation another and a better icon. One worthy of the loyalty of the Russian people.'

'There's no such man. Never has been.'

'Oh, there was,' said Nigel Irvine. 'Once, long ago. He was called the Tsar of All the Russias.'

LANGLEY, SEPTEMBER 1990

Colonel Turkin, agent Lysander, sent one urgent message and it was personal to Jason Monk. It was on a postcard which showed the open terrace of the Opera Café in East Berlin. The message was simple and innocent. 'Hope to see you again. All best wishes, Jose-Maria.' It had been posted to a CIA safe mailbox in Bonn and the frank said it had been dropped into a mailbox in West Berlin.

The CIA people in Bonn did not know who had sent it, only that it was for Jason Monk and he was in Langley. They forwarded it. That it had been posted in West Berlin meant nothing. Turkin had simply flicked it, fully stamped, through the open window of a car with West Berlin plates heading back into the West. He had simply uttered 'Bitte' to the startled driver and kept on walking. By the time his 'tail' came round the corner, they missed it. The kindly Berliner had posted it.

Such hit-and-miss measures are not recommended, stranger things have happened.

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Such hit-and-miss measures are not recommended, but stranger things have happened.

It was the date scrawled above the message that was

is wrong. The card was posted on 8 September
erman or Spaniard would write that as: 8/9/90
day first, then the month, then the year. But the
the card seemed to have been written American-
t said 9/23/90. To Jason Monk it meant: I need to
at 9 p.m. on the 23rd of this month. It was meant
read backwards. And the sign-off with a Spanish
e meant: this is serious and urgent.
he place was obvious, the terrace of the Opera Café,
st Berlin.

On 3 October the final reunification of the city of
Berlin was due to take place, along with the reunification
of Germany. The writ of the USSR in the East would
cease to run. The West Berlin police would move in and
take over. The KGB operation would have to withdraw
to a much smaller unit inside the Soviet embassy on
Unter den Linden. Some of the huge operation would
have to be withdrawn to Moscow. Turkin might be going
with them. If he wanted to run, now was the time, but he
had a wife and son back in Moscow. The autumn school
term had just started.

There was something he wanted to say, and he wanted
to say it personally to his friend. Urgently. Unlike
Turkin, Monk knew of the disappearance of Delphi
Orion and Pegasus. As the days ticked by he became sick
with worry.

said Saul Nathanson as he poured two glasses of a very fine Chardonnay. 'But could I ask you a personal one?'

'My dear chap, of course. Can't guarantee to answer it, though.'

'I'll fire anyway. You came to Wyoming hoping the Council would sanction some kind of action, did you not?'

'Well, I suppose so. But I thought you said it all, better than I could.'

'We were all shocked. Genuinely. But there were seven Jews round that table. Why you?'

Nigel Irvine stared down at the passing clouds beneath. Somewhere below them were the vast wheat prairies, even now being harvested. All that food. He saw again another place, far away and long ago; British Tommies puking in the sun, the bulldozer drivers with faces masked against the stench, pushing the mounds of corpses into gaping pits, living skeleton arms coming out from the stinking bunks, human claws asking mutely for food.

'Don't know really. Been through it once. Don't want to see it all again. Old-fashioned, I suppose.'

Nathanson laughed. 'Old-fashioned. OK, I'll drink to that. Will you be going into Russia yourself?'

'Oh, I don't see how it can be avoided.'

'Just you take care of yourself, my friend.'

'Saul, in the service we used to have a saying. There are old agents and there are bold agents; but there are no old, bold agents. I'll take care.'

As he was staying in Georgetown, his friend had proposed a pleasant little restaurant of French ambience called La Chaumière, barely a hundred yards from the Four Seasons.

Irvine was there first, found a bench nearby and sat and waited, an old man with silver hair round whom the young roller-bladers wove a path.

The chief of the SIS has long been a more hands-on

executive than the Director of the CIA, and when he used to come to Langley it was with his fellow intelligence professionals, the deputy directors for operations and intelligence, with whom he felt the greater empathy. They shared a common bond not always possible with the political appointee from the White House.

The cab drew up and a white-haired American of similar age climbed out and paid. Irvine crossed the road and tapped him on the shoulder 'Long time no see. How are you, Carey?'

Carey Jordan's face broke into a grin. 'Nigel, what the hell are you doing here? And why the lunch?'

'You complaining?'

'Absolutely not. Good to see you.'

'Then I'll tell you inside.'

They were a little early and the lunch crowd had not arrived. The waiter asked if they wanted a smoking or non-smoking table. Smoking, said Jordan. Irvine raised an eyebrow. Neither of them smoked.

But Jordan knew what he was doing. In politically correct Georgetown they were shown to a private booth right at the back where they could talk unheard.

The waiter brought the menus and a wine list. Both men chose a starter and then meat. Irvine cast his eye down the list of Bordeaux and spotted an excellent Beychevelle. The waiter beamed; it was not cheap and had been in-house for quite some time. In minutes he was back, offered the label, got a nod, uncorked and decanted.

'So,' said Carey Jordan, when they were alone. 'What brings you to this neck of the woods. Nostalgia?'

'Not exactly. A problem, I suppose.'

'Anything to do with those high-and-mighty folks you've been conversing with in Wyoming?'

'Ah, Carey, dear Carey, they should never have fired you.'

'I know it. What's the problem?'

'There's something serious and rather bad going on in Russia.'

'What else is new?'

'This is. And it's worse than usual. The official agencies of both our countries have been warned off.'

'Why?'

'Official timidity, I suppose.'

Jordan snorted. 'Like I said, what else is new?'

'So . . . anyway . . . the view last week was that someone perhaps ought to go and have a look.'

'Someone? Despite the warn-off?'

'That's the general idea.'

'So why come to me? I'm out of it. Have been these past twelve years.'

'Do you still speak to Langley?'

'No-one speaks to Langley any more.'

'Then that's why you, Carey. Fact is, I need a man. Able to go into Russia. Without drawing attention.'

'On the black?'

'Afraid so.'

'Against the FSB?'

When Gorbachev, just before his own ouster, broke up the KGB, the First Chief Directorate was renamed the SVR but still carried on as before from its old headquarters at Yazenevo; the Second Chief Directorate, covering internal security, was renamed the FSB.

'Probably nastier than that.'

Carey Jordan chewed on his whitebait, thought, then shook his head. 'No, he wouldn't go. Never again.'

'Who, pray? Who wouldn't go?'

'Guy I was thinking of. Also out of it, like me. But not as old. He was good. Cool nerve, very smart, a cool-off a natural. Fired five years ago.'

'He's still alive?'

'So far as I know. Hey, this wine is good. Not often I get wine this good.'

Irvine topped up his glass.

'What was his name, this fellow who wouldn't go?'

'Monk. Jason Monk. Spoke Russian like a native. Best goddamn agent-runner I ever had.'

'OK, even though he won't go, tell me about Jason Monk.'

So the old former DDO did that.

EAST BERLIN, SEPTEMBER 1990

It was a warm autumn evening and the café terrace was crowded. Colonel Turkin, in a lightweight suit of German cloth and cut, attracted no attention when he took his seat at a small table close to the sidewalk at the very moment it was vacated by a loving couple of teenagers.

When the waiter cleared away the glasses, he ordered a coffee, opened a German newspaper and began to read.

Precisely because he had spent his career in counter-intelligence, with its onus on surveillance, he was deemed to be an expert in counter-surveillance. The watchers from the KGB were therefore keeping their distance. But they were there; a man and a woman across the Opera Square, seated on a bench, youthful, carefree and each with their Walkman headsets over their ears.

Each could communicate with two cars parked round the corner, passing their observations and receiving instructions. In the two cars were the snatch squad, for the arrest order had finally been given.

Two last pieces of information had tipped the balance against Turkin. In his description, Ames had said Lysander was recruited outside the USSR and spoke Spanish. The language alone gave the Investigation Branch the whole of Latin America plus Spain in their hunt of the records. The alternative candidate, it recently proved, had arrived on his first South American posting, to Ecuador, five years earlier. But Ames had said the recruitment of Lysander took place six years ago.

The second and clinching piece of evidence stemmed from the bright idea of checking all the phone records out of the KGB's headquarters in East Berlin the night of the

abortive raid on the CIA postbox apartment, the night the flat's occupant had done his runner one hour before the raid.

The logs revealed a call made from the public phone in the lobby to the same number as the designated apartment. The other suspect had been in Potsdam that night, and the leader of the abortive raid had been Colonel Turkin.

The formal arrest would have taken place earlier, but for the fact that a very senior officer was expected from Moscow. He had insisted on being present at the arrest, and personally escorting the suspect back to the USSR. Quite suddenly the suspect had left, on foot, and the watchers had no choice but to follow.

A Spanish-Morocco shoe-cleaner shuffled along the pavement by the café, gesturing to those in the front row to ask if they wished to have their shoes cleaned. He received a series of shakes of the head. The East Berliners were not accustomed to see itinerant shoeshine boys at their cafés, and the West Berliners among them mostly believed there were far too many immigrants from the Third World infesting their rich city.

Eventually the itinerant got a nod, whipped his small stool under his backside and squatted in front of his customer, quickly applying a thick application of black polish to the lace-up brogues. A waiter approached to shoo him away.

'Now he has started, might as well let him finish,' said the customer in accented German. The waiter shrugged and moved off.

'Been a long time, Kolya,' muttered the shoeblack in Spanish, 'how are you?'

The Russian leaned forward to point out where he wanted more polish.

'Not so good, I think there are problems.'

'Tell me.'

'Two months ago I had to raid an apartment here. Denounced as a CIA postbox. I managed to make one call; the man had time to run. But how did

now? Has someone been taken . . . talked?

'Possibly. Why do you think so?'

'There's more, and worse. Two weeks ago, just before my postcard, an officer came through from Moscow. I know he works in Analysis. His wife is East German; they were visiting. There was a party, he got drunk. He boasted there had been arrests in Moscow. Someone in the Defence Ministry, someone in Foreign Affairs.'

To Monk the news was like a kick in the face from the brogues to which he was applying a final shine.

'Someone at the table said something like: you must have a good source in the enemy camp. The man tapped the side of his nose and winked.'

'You must come out, Kolya. Now, this night. Come across.'

'I can't leave Ludmila and Yuri. They are in Moscow.'

'Get them back here, my friend. Any excuse in the world. This is Soviet territory for ten more days. Then it becomes West German. They will not be able to travel here after that.'

'You are right. Within ten days we come across, as a family. You will take care of us?'

'I'll handle it personally. Don't delay.'

The Russian handed the Moroccan a fistful of East German Marks, which could be stored for ten days then exchanged for valuable Deutschmarks. The shoeblack rose, nodded his thanks and shuffled away.

The two across the square heard a voice in their ears.

'We are complete. Arrest is on. Go, go, go.'

The two grey Czech Tatras came round the corner into Opera Square and raced to the kerb beside the café. From the first, three men burst onto the sidewalk, shouldered two pedestrians out of their way and grabbed one of the café customers in the front row. The second car ejected two more men who held the rear door open and stood guard.

There were varied cries of alarm from the customer as the man in the light suit was picked up bodily and hurled into the rear of the second car. The door slammed

and it roared away on screeching tyres. The snatch squad threw themselves back into the first car and it followed. The whole operation lasted seven seconds.

At the end of the block Jason Monk, a hundred yards from the assault, watched helplessly.

'What happened after Berlin?' asked Sir Nigel Irvine.

Some of the lunchers were picking up their credit cards and leaving to return to work or pleasure. The Englishman lifted the bottle of Beychevelle, noted there was nothing in it and gestured to the waiter for a replacement.

'Are you trying to get me drunk, Nigel?' asked Jordan with a wry smile.

'Tut, tut, I'm afraid we're both old enough and ugly enough to take our wine like gentlemen.'

'Guess so. Anyway, I'm not often offered Château Beychevelle these days.'

The waiter offered the new bottle, got a nod from Sir Nigel, uncorked and decanted.

'So, what shall we drink to?' asked Jordan. 'The Great Game? Or maybe the Great Foul-up,' he added bitterly.

'No, to the old days. And to the clarity. I think that's what I miss most, what the youngsters don't have. The absolute moral clarity.'

'I'll drink to that. So, Berlin. Well, Monk came back madder than a mountain lion with his ass on fire. I wasn't there, of course, but I was still talking with guys like Milt Bearden. I mean, we went back a long way. So I got the picture.

'Monk was going round the building telling anyone who would listen that the Soviet Division had a high-placed mole right inside it. Naturally, it wasn't what they wanted to hear. Write it down, they said. So he did. It was a pretty hair-raising document. It accused just about everyone of blithering incompetence.

'Milt Bearden had finally managed to squeeze Ames'

out of his Soviet Division. But the guy was like a leech. In the interim the Director had formed a new counter-intelligence centre. Inside it was the Analysis Group and within that the USSR branch. The branch needed a former ops directorate case officer; Mulgrew proposed Ames, and by God he got it. You can guess whom Monk had to address himself to with his complaint. Aldrich Ames himself.'

'That must have been a bit of a shock to the system,' murmured Irvine.

'They say the Devil looks after his own, Nigel. From Ames's point of view it was the best thing that he handle Monk. He could trash the report and did. In fact he went further. He counter-accused Monk of baseless scaremongering. Where was the proof for all this? he said.

'The upshot was, there was an internal inquiry. Not on the existence of a mole but on Monk.'

'A sort of court martial?'

Carey Jordan nodded bitterly. 'Yeah, I guess so. I would've spoken for Jason, but I wasn't in very good odour around that time. Anyway, the chair was taken by Ken Mulgrew. The outcome was they decided Monk had actually made up the Berlin meeting to advance a fading career.'

'Nice of them.'

'Very nice of them. But by then the ops directorate was bureaucrats wall to wall, apart from a few old warriors serving out their time. After forty years we'd finally won the Cold War, the Soviet empire was crashing down. It should have been a time of vindication, but it was all bickering and paper-pushing.'

'And Monk, what happened to him?'

'They nearly fired him. Instead they busted him down. Gave him some no-no slot in Records or somewhere. Buried him. Not wanted on voyage. He should have quit, taken his pension and gone. But he always was a tenacious bastard. He stuck it out, convinced that one day he would be proved right. He sat and rotted in

that job for three long years. And eventually he was.'

'Proved right?'

'Of course. But too late.'

MOSCOW, JANUARY 1991

Colonel Anatoli Grishin left the interrogation room and withdrew to his own office in a black rage.

The panel of officers who had carried out the questioning were satisfied they had it all. There would be no more sessions of the Monakh committee. It was all on tape, the whole story right back to a small boy falling ill in Nairobi in 1983 up to the snatch at the Opera Café the previous September.

Somehow the men from the First Chief Directorate knew that Monk had been disgraced among his own people: busted, finished. That could only mean he had no more agents. Four had been the total, but what four they had been! Now one was left alive but not for long, Grishin was certain.

So the Monakh committee was over, disbanded. It had done its job. It should have been a matter for triumph. But Grishin's rage stemmed from something that had come out of the last session.

One hundred metres. One hundred miserable metres . . . The report of the watcher team had been adamant. On his last day of freedom Nikolzi Turkin had made no contact with enemy agents. He had spent the day inside the HQ, had taken his supper in the canteen then unexpectedly walked out and been followed to a large café where he took a coffee and had his shoes cleaned.

It was Turkin who had let it slip. The two watchers across the square had seen the shoe-cleaner do his job and shuffle away. Seconds later the KGB cars, with Grishin beside the driver of the first, had come round the corner. At that moment he had been just one hundred metres from Jason Monk on Soviet-ruled territory.

In the interrogation room every eye on the panel had swivelled round to stare at him. He ha

of the snatch, they seemed to be saying, and he had missed the biggest prize of all.

There would be pain, of course. Not as persuasion but as punishment. This he swore. Then he was overruled. General Boyarov had told him personally that the chairman of the KGB wanted a quick execution; the chairman was fearful that in these rapidly changing times it might be refused. He was taking the warrant to the president that day and it should be carried out the following morning.

And times were changing, with bewildering speed. From all sides his service was under accusation from scum in the newly liberated press, scum whom he knew how to deal with.

What he did not then know was that in August his own chairman, General Kryuchkov, would lead a *coup d'état* against Gorbachev, and it would fail. In revenge, Gorbachev would break the KGB into several fragments; and that the Soviet Union itself would finally collapse in December.

While Grishin sat in his office that day in January and . . . , General Kryuchkov laid the execution warrant for the former KGB Colonel Turkin on the president's desk. Gorbachev lifted his pen, paused and laid it down again.

The previous August Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait. Now American jets were pounding the life out of Iraq. A land invasion was imminent. Various world statesmen were seeking to intercede, proposing themselves as international brokers of peace. It was a tempting role. One of them was Mikhail Gorbachev.

'I accept what this man has done, and that he deserves to die,' said the president.

'It is the law,' said Kryuchkov.

'Yes, but at this moment . . . I think it would be inadvisable.'

He made up his mind and handed the warrant back, unsigned.

'I have the right to exercise clemency, and I

do so. Seven years with hard labour.'

General Kryuchkov left in a rage. This kind of degeneracy could not go on, he vowed. Sooner or later he and others of like mind would have to strike.

For Grishin the news was the last blow of a miserable day. All he could do was ensure that the slave-camp to which Turkin would be sent was of a kind and of a regime that he could never survive.

In the early 1980s the camps of political prisoners had been moved from the too-accessible Mordavia further north to the region round Perm, Grishin's own birthplace. A dozen of them were scattered round the town of Vsesvyatskoye. The best-known were the hell-holes of Perm-35, Perm-36 and Perm-37.

But there was one very special camp reserved for traitors. Nizhni Tagil was a place that caused a shudder even among the KGB.

However harsh the guards were, they lived outside the camp. Their brutalities could only be sporadic and institutional: the reduction of rations, the increase of labour. To make sure the 'educated' criminals lived constantly with the real facts of life, they were mixed inside Nizhni Tagil with a cull of the most vicious and violent of all the *zeki* in all the camps.

Grishin ensured that Nikolai Turkin was sent to Nizhni Tagil, and, under the heading 'regime' on his sentencing form, he wrote: special – ultra strict.

'Anyway,' sighed Carey Jordan, 'I guess you recall the end of that unlovely saga.'

'Much of it. Remind me.' He raised a hand and to the hovering waiter said, 'Two espressos, if you please.'

'Well, in the last year, 1993, the FBI finally took over the eight-year mole-hunt. They claimed later they cracked it all themselves inside eighteen months, but a lot of the elimination work had already been done, but too slowly.

'To give credit, the Feds did do what we should h

done. They pissed on civil rights and got covert court orders to examine the banking records of the few remaining suspects. They forced the banks to come clean. And it worked. Aldrich Ames was discovered to be a dollar millionaire, and that was without the Swiss accounts found later. His excuse that his wife was rich in Colombia was proved false, and they put him under total surveillance.

'They took his household trash, entered his house in his absence and raided his computer. It was all there, enough to nail him anyway. Letters to and from the KGB, records of huge money payments, details of dead-letter boxes around the Washington area.

'On February 21, 1994 – Jesus, Nigel, will I always remember that date? – they picked him up, just a few blocks from his mansion in Arlington. After that it all came out.'

'Did you know in advance?'

'Nope. I guess the bureau was smart not to tell me. If I'd known then what I know now I'd have got there before them and killed him myself. I'd have gone to the chair a happy man.'

The old DDO stared across the restaurant, but he was staring at a list of names and faces, all long gone.

'Forty-five operations ruined, twenty-two men betrayed – eighteen Russians and four from the satellites. Fourteen of them executed. And all because that warped little serial killer-by-proxy wanted a big house and a Jaguar.'

Nigel Irvine did not want to intrude upon private grief, but he murmured, 'You should have done it yourself, in-house.'

'I know, I know. We all know now. We should have gone for the finances and to hell with civil rights. Even by the spring of 1986 Ames had already received over a quarter of a million dollars and had banked it locally. We should have given the top forty-one with access to the 301 files the hostile polygraph. Uncomfortable for the innocents, but Ames would have been exposed.'

'And Monk?' asked the Englishman. Carey Jordan gave a short laugh. The waiter, now wishing to clear away the last table in the empty restaurant, shimmered by, waving the bill. Irvine gestured that it be placed in front of him. The young man hovered until a credit card was placed upon it, then went off to the till desk.

'Yes, Monk. Well, he didn't know either. That day was the President's Day, a federal public holiday. So he stayed at home, I guess. There was nothing on the news until the following morning. And that was when the damn letter arrived.'

WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 1994

The letter came on the 22nd, the day after President's Day, when mail deliveries resumed, and it came first post.

It was a crisp white envelope and from the frank Monk could see it was from the mailroom at Langley, but addressed to his private residence, not his office.

Inside it was another envelope bearing the crest of a US embassy. On the front was typed: 'Mr Jason Monk, c/o Central Mailroom, CIA Headquarters Building, Langley, Virginia'. And someone had scrawled 'PTO'. Monk turned it over. On the back the same hand had written: 'Delivered by hand to our embassy, Vilnius, Lithuania. Guess you know the guy?' As it bore no stamp, the inner envelope had clearly come to the States in the diplomatic pouch.

Inside this was a third envelope, of much inferior quality, with fragments of wood pulp visible in the texture. It was addressed in quaint English: 'Please [underlined three times], pass forward to Mr Jason Monk at CIA. From a friend.'

The actual letter was inside this. It was written on paper so frail that the leaves almost fell apart at the touch. Lavatory paper? The flyleaves of an old and cheap paperback book? Could have been.

The writing was in Russian, the hand shaky, and in

black ink with an uncertain nib. At the top it was headed: 'Nizhni Tagil, September 1994.'

It said:

'Dear Friend Jason, if you ever get this, and by the time you get it, I will be dead. It is the typhoid, you see. It comes with the fleas and the lice. They are closing this camp now, breaking it up, to wipe it off the face of the earth as if it had never been, which it should not.

'A dozen among the politicals have been granted an amnesty; there is someone called Yeltsin in Moscow now. One of those is my friend, a Lithuanian, a writer and intellectual. I think I can trust him. He promises me he will hide this and send it when he reaches home.

'I will have to take another train, another cattle truck, to a new place, but I will never see it. So I send you my farewell, and some news.'

The letter described what had happened after the arrest in East Berlin three and a half years earlier. Nikolai Turkin told of the beatings in the cell beneath Lefortovo and how he saw no point in not telling everything he knew. He described the stinking, excrement-smeared cell with the weeping walls and the endless chill, the harsh lights, the shouted questions, the blackened eyes and broken teeth if an answer was slow in coming.

He told of Colonel Anatoli Grishin. The colonel had been convinced Turkin was going to die, so he had been happy to boast of previous triumphs. Turkin was told in detail of men he had never heard of: Kruglov, Blinov and Solomin. He was told what Grishin had done to the Siberian soldier to make him talk.

'When it was over, I prayed for death as I have many times since. There have been many suicides in this camp, but somehow I always hoped that if I could hold on, I might one day be free. Not that you would recognize me, nor would Ludmila or my boy Yuri. No hair left, no teeth, not much body and that torn by wounds and fever.'

He told of the long journey by cattle truck from Moscow to the camp, confined with underworld

criminals who beat him senseless and spat in his face to infect him with their tuberculosis. He described the camp itself where even among the others he was singled out for smaller rations and harder labour; after six months he had broken his collarbone hauling logs, but there had been no medication and, seeing his injury, the guards insisted he carry the logs in future on the broken shoulder. At the end he wrote: 'I do not regret what I did, for it was a foul regime. Perhaps now there will be freedom for my people. Somewhere there is my wife, I hope she is happy. And my son Yuri, who owes his life to you. Thank you for that. Goodbye my friend. Nikolai Ilyich.'

Jason Monk folded the letter, placed it on a side table, put his head in his hands and cried like a child. He did not go into work that day. He did not ring and explain why. He did not answer the phone. At six p.m., when it was already dark, he checked the phone book, got into his car and drove across to Arlington.

He knocked quite politely on the door of the house he sought, and when it opened he nodded at the woman, said, 'Good evening, Mrs Mulgrew,' and walked on past, leaving her speechless in the doorway.

Ken Mulgrew was in the living-room, his jacket off and a large glass of whisky in one hand. He turned, saw the intruder and said, 'Hey, what the hell? You burst . . .'

It was the last thing he said without whistling uncomfortably for several weeks. Monk hit him. He hit him on the jaw and he hit him very hard.

Mulgrew was a bigger man, but he was out of condition and still feeling the effects of a very liquid lunch. He had been to the office that day, but no-one was doing anything except discuss in traumatized whispers the news that was raging through the building like forest fire.

Monk hit him four times in all, one for each of his lost agents. Apart from breaking his jaw, he blacked both his eyes and broke his nose. Then he walked out.

'Sounds like a bit of an active measure,' suggested Nigel Irvine.

'About as active as you can get,' agreed Jordan.

'What happened?'

'Well, Mrs Mulgrew thankfully didn't call the cops, she called the agency. They sent a few guys round, just in time to find Mulgrew being shovelled into the ambulance, en route to the nearest emergency room. They calmed down the wife and she identified Monk. So the guys drove round to his place.

'He was there, and they asked him what the fuck he thought he had done and he gestured at the letter on the table. Of course, they couldn't read it, but they took it with them.'

'He was busted? Monk?' asked the Englishman.

'Right. This time they busted him for good. There was a lot of sympathy, of course, when the letter was read out in translation at the hearing. They even let me speak for him, whatever good that did. But the outcome was foregone. Even in the aftermath of the Ames arrest, you couldn't have spooks with a grudge going around turning senior officers into hamburger. They fired him outright.'

The waiter was back again, looking plaintive. Both men rose and headed towards the door. The highly relieved waiter nodded and smiled.

'What about Mulgrew?'

'Ironically, he was dismissed in disgrace a year later, when the full measure of what Ames had done was more widely known.'

'And Monk?'

'He left town. He was living with a girl at the time, but she was away on a seminar and when she came back they parted. I heard Monk took his pension as a lump sum, but anyway he left Washington.'

'Any idea where for?'

'Last I heard he was in your neck of the woods.'

'London? Britain?'

'Not quite. One of Her Majesty's colonies.'

'Dependent territories; they're not called colonies any more. Which one?'

'Turks and Caicos Islands. You know I said he loved deep-sea fishing? Last I heard he had a boat down there, working as a charter skipper.'

It was a brilliant autumn day and Georgetown was looking lovely as they stood on the sidewalk in front of La Chaumière waiting for a cab for Carey Jordan.

'You really want him to go back to Russia, Nigel?'

'That's the general idea.'

'He won't go. He swore he'd never go back. I loved the lunch and the wine, but it was a waste of time. Thanks all the same, but he won't go. Not for money, not for threats, not for anything.'

A cab came. They shook hands, Jordan climbed in and drove off. Sir Nigel Irvine crossed the road to the Four Seasons. He had some phone calls to make.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The *Foxy Lady* was tied up and closed down for the night. Jason Monk had bidden farewell to his three Italian clients who, although they had not caught much, seemed to have enjoyed the outing almost as much as the wine they had brought with them.

Julius was standing at the filleting table beside the dock, slicing the heads and offal from two modestly sized dorado. His own back pocket contained his wages for the day plus his share of the gratuity the Italians had left behind.

Monk strolled past the Tiki Hut towards the Banana Boat whose open-sided plank-floored drinking and dining area was thronged with early imbibers. He walked up to the bar and nodded to Rocky.

'The usual?' grinned the barman.

'Why not? I'm a creature of habit.'

He had been a regular for years and there was an understanding that the Banana Boat would take calls for him while he was at sea. Indeed, the number of the restaurant/bar was on the cards he had placed with all the hotels on the island of Providenciales to attract clients for a fishing charter.

Rocky's wife Mabel called over.

'Grace Bay Club called.'

'Uhuh. Any message?'

'No, just call 'em back.'

She pushed the telephone she kept behind her cash desk towards him. He dialled and got the operator at the reception desk. She recognized his voice.

'Hi, Jason, had a good day?'

'Not bad, Lucy. Seen worse. You called?'

'Yeah. What you doin' tomorrow?'

'You bad girl, what had you in mind?'

There was a scream of laughter from the big, jolly lady

in the reception area of the hotel three miles down the beach.

The permanent residents of the island of Provo did not constitute an enormous group and within the community catering for the tourists who made up the island's sole source of dollar income just about everyone knew everyone, islander or settler, and the light-hearted badinage helped the time go by. The Turks and Caicos were still the West Indies as they used to be: friendly, easy-going and not in too much of a hurry.

'Don't you start, Jason Monk. You free for a client tomorrow?'

He thought it over. He had intended to spend the day working on the boat, a task that never ends for boat-owners, but a charter was a charter and the finance company in Miami that still owned half the *Foxy Lady* never tired of repayment cheques.

'Guts! I am. Full day or half-day?'

'Half-day. Morning. Say about nine o'clock?'

'OK. Tell the party where to find me. I'll be ready.'

'It's not a group, Jason. Just one man, a Mr Irvine. I'll tell him. Bye now.'

Jason put the phone down. Single clients were unusual; normally they were two or more. Probably a husband whose wife did not want to come; that was pretty normal, too. He finished his *caquini* and went back to the boat to tell Julius they would have to meet at seven to fuel up and get some fresh baits on board.

The client, when he appeared at quarter to nine the next morning, was older than the usual fisherman, elderly in fact, in tan slacks, cotton shirt and white Panama hat. He stood on the dock and called up, 'Captain Monk?'

Jason clambered down from his flying bridge and went to greet him. He was evidently English, by his accent. Julius helped him aboard.

'You tried this before, Mr Irvine?' Jason asked.

'Actually, no. My first time. Bit of a new boy.'

'Don't worry about it, sir. We'll take care of you. The

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sea's pretty calm, but if you find it's too much, just say.'

It never ceased to surprise him how many tourists went out to sea with the presumption that the ocean would be as calm as the water inside the reef. Tourist brochures never show a white-cap wave around the West Indies, but there can be some seriously bumpy seas.

He eased the *Foxy Lady* out of Turtle Cove and turned half-right towards Sellar's Cut. Out beyond North-West Point there would be wild water, probably too much for the old man, but he knew a spot off Pine Key in the other direction where the seas were easier and reports had it there were dorado running.

He ran at full cruise for forty minutes, then saw a large mat of floating weed, the sort of place where dorado were wont to lie in the shade just below the surface.

Julius streamed four rigs and lines as the power came off and they started to cruise round the bed of reed. It was on the third circuit that they got a strike.

One of the rods dipped violently, then the line began to scream out of the Penn Senator. The Englishman got up from beneath the awning and sedately took his place in the fighting chair. Julius handed him the rod, slotted the butt into the cup between the client's thighs and began to haul in the other three lines.

Jason Monk turned the nose of the *Foxy Lady* away from the weed, set her power just above 'idle' and came down to the afterdeck. The fish had stopped taking line, but the rod was well bent.

'Just haul back,' said Monk gently. 'Haul back until the rod is upright, then ease forward and wind in as you go.'

The Englishman tried it. After ten minutes he said, 'I think this is a bit too much for me, you know. Strong things, fish.'

'OK, I'll take it if you like.'

'I'd be most grateful if you would.'

Monk slipped into the fighting chair as the client climbed out and returned to the shade of the awning. It was half past ten and the heat was fierce. The sun was

astern and the glare came off the water like a blade.

It took ten minutes of hard pumping to bring the fish close to the transom. Then it saw the hull and made another run for freedom, taking a further thirty yards of line.

'What is it?' asked the client.

'Big bull dolphin' said Monk.

'Oh, dear, I rather like dolphins.'

'Not the bottle-nosed mammal. Same name but different. Also called dorado. It's a game fish, and very good to eat.'

Julius had the gaff-hook ready and as the dorado came alongside he swung expertly and brought the forty-pounder over the edge.

'Good fish, Mister,' he said.

'Ah, but I think Mr Monk's fish, not mine.'

Monk climbed out of the chair, disengaged the hook from the dorado's mouth and unclipped the steel trace from the line. Julius, about to put the catch into the stern locker, looked surprised. With the dorado on board, the routine would be to stream the four lines again, not put them away.

'Go topside and take the helm,' Monk told him quietly. 'Head for home, trolling speed.'

Julius nodded without understanding and his lean ebony form went up the ladder to the upper control panel. Monk bent to the chilled trunk, extracted two cans of beer and popped both, offering one to his client. Then he sat on the trunk and looked at the elderly Englishman in the shade.

'You don't really want to come fishing, do you, Mr Irvine.' It was not a question but a statement.

'Not my passion, actually.'

'No. And it's not Mr Irvine, is it? Something bothering me all this trip. A VIP visit at Langley, way back by the big honcho from the British Intelligence Service.'

'Quite a memory, Mr Monk.'

'The name Sir Nigel seems to ring a bell. OK, Sir Nigel.'

Irvine, can we please stop fooling around. What is all this about?’

‘Sorry for the deception. Just wanted to have a look. And a talk. In privacy. Few places more private than the open sea.’

‘So . . . we’re talking. What about?’

‘Russia, I’m afraid.’

‘Uhuh, big country. Not my favourite. Who sent you here?’

‘Oh, nobody sent me. Carey Jordan told me about you. We lunched in Georgetown a couple of days ago. He sends his best wishes.’

‘Nice of him. Thank him if you see him again. But you must have noticed that he is out of it these days. Know what I mean by “it”? Out of the game. Well, so am I. Whatever you came for, sir, it was a wasted journey.’

‘Ah, yes, that’s what Carey said. Don’t bother he said. But I did anyway. It’s a long journey. Mind if I make my pitch? Isn’t that what you chaps say? Make my pitch, put my proposal?’

‘That’s the expression. Well, it’s a hot and sunny day in paradise. You have two hours left of a four-hour charter. Talk if you wish, but the answer’s still No.’

‘Have you ever heard of a man called Igor Komarov?’

‘We get the papers here, a couple of days late, but we get ’em. And we listen to the radio. Personally I don’t have a satellite dish, so I don’t get TV. Yes, I’ve heard of him. The coming man, isn’t he?’

‘So they say. What have you heard of him?’

‘He heads the right wing. Nationalist, appeals to patriotism a lot. That sort of thing. Makes a mass appeal.’

‘How far right-wing would you think he is?’

Monk shrugged. ‘I don’t know. Pretty much, I guess. About as far as some of those deep-South ultra-conservative senators back home.’

‘A bit more than that, I’m afraid. He’s so far right he’s off the map.’

‘Well, Sir Nigel, that’s terribly tragic. But right now my major concern is whether I have a charter for

tomorrow and whether the wahoo are running fifteen miles off North-West Point. The politics of the unlovely Mr Komarov do not concern me.'

'Well, they will, I fear. One day. I . . . we . . . some friends and colleagues, feel he really should be stopped. We need a man to go into Russia. Carey said you were good . . . once. Said you were the best . . . once.'

'Yes, well, that was once.' Monk stared at Sir Nigel for several seconds in silence. 'You're saying this isn't even official. This is not government policy, yours or mine.'

'Well done. Our two governments take the view there is nothing they can do. Officially.'

'And you think I am going to pull anchor, cross the world and go into Russia to tangle with this yoyo at the behest of some group of Don Quixotes who don't even have government backing?'

He stood up, crushed the empty beer can in one fist and tossed it in the trash bucket.

'I'm sorry, Sir Nigel. You really did waste your air fare. Let's get back to harbour. The trip's on the house.'

He went back to the flying bridge, took the helm and headed for the Cut. Ten minutes after they entered the lagoon the *Foxy Lady* was back at her slot on the quay-side.

'You're wrong about the trip,' said the Englishman. 'I engaged you in bad faith, but you took the charter in good faith. How much is a half-day charter?'

'Three fifty dollars.'

'With a gratuity for your young friend.' Irvine peeled four 100-dollar bills from a wad. 'By the by, do you have an afternoon charter?'

'No, I don't.'

'So you'll be going home?'

'Yep.'

'Me too. I'm afraid at my age a short nap after lunch is called for in this heat. But while you're sitting in the shade, waiting for the heat of the day to pass, would you do something?'

'No more fishing,' warned Monk.

thoughts, rose and refilled their glasses from the pitcher.

'Nice try, Sir Nigel. Maybe you're right. Maybe he can be stopped. But not by me. You'll have to find yourself another boy.'

'My patrons are not ungenerous people. There'd be a fee, of course. Labourer's worthy of his hire and all that. Half a million dollars. US, of course. Quite a tidy sum, even in these times.'

Monk contemplated a sum like that. Wipe out the debt on the *Foxy Lady*, buy the bungalow, a decent truck. And half left over shrewdly invested to produce 10 per cent per annum. He shook his head.

'I came out of that damn country, and I came out by the skin of my teeth. And I swore I'd never go back. It's tempting, but no.'

'Ah, hum, sorry about this, but needs must. These were waiting in my pigeon-hole back at the hotel today.'

He reached into his jacket pocket and handed over two slim white envelopes. Monk eased a single sheet of formal headed paper out of each.

One was from the Florida finance company. It stated that owing to changes in policy, extended loan facilities in certain territories were no longer deemed acceptable risks. The loan on the *Foxy Lady* should therefore be repaid in one month, failing which foreclosure and repossession would be the company's only choice. The language involved the usual weasel words, but the meaning was plain enough.

The other sheet bore the emblem of Her Majesty's Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands. It regretted that His Excellency, who was not required to give reasons, intended to terminate the residence permit and business licence of one Jason Monk, US citizen, with effect from one month from the date of the letter. The writer signed himself as Mr Monk's obedient servant.

Monk folded both letters and placed them on the table between the two rocking-chairs.

'That's dirty pool,' he said quietly.

'I'm afraid it is,' said Nigel Irvine, staring

over the water. 'But that's the choice.'

'Can't you find somebody else?' asked Monk.

'I don't want anybody else. I want you.'

'OK, bust me. It's been done before. I survived. I'll survive again. But I ain't going back to Russia.'

Irvine sighed. He picked up the Black Manifesto.

'That's what Carey said. He told me, he won't go for money and he won't go for threats. That's what he said.'

'Well, at least Carey hasn't turned into a fool in his old age.' Monk rose. 'I can't say it's been a pleasure, after all. But I don't think we have anything else to say to each other.'

Sir Nigel Irvine rose too. He looked sad. 'Suppose not. Pity, great pity. Oh, one last thing. When Komarov comes to power, he will not be alone. By his side stands his personal bodyguard and commander of the Black Guards. When the genocide starts, he will be in charge of it all, the nation's executioner.'

He held out a single photograph. Monk stared at the cold face of a man about five years older than himself. The Englishman was walking up the sand-track to where he had left his buggy behind the house.

'Who the hell's he?' Monk called after him. The old spymaster's voice came back through the deepening dusk.

'Oh, him. That is Colonel Anatoli Grishin.'

Providenciales airport is not the world's great aviation terminal but it is a pleasant enough place to arrive and depart, being small enough to process passengers without much delay. The following day Sir Nigel Irvine checked in his single suitcase, was nodded through passport control and sauntered into the departure area. The American Airlines plane for Miami was waiting in the sun.

Because of the heat, most of the buildings are open-sided and only a chain-link fence separated the area from the open tarmac beyond. Someone had wandered round the building and stood beside the chain-link looking in.

Irvine walked over. At that moment boarding was called and the passengers began to stream towards the plane.

'All right,' said Jason Monk through the wire, 'when and where?'

Irvine drew an airline ticket from his breast pocket and pushed it through the wire.

'Providenciales-Miami-London. First class, of course. Five days from now. Time to clear things up here. Be away about three months. If the January elections take place, we're too late. If you're on the plane at Heathrow, you'll be met.'

'By you?'

'Doubt it. By someone.'

'How will they know me?'

'They'll know you.'

A ground stewardess tugged at his jacket. 'Passenger Irvine, please, boarding now.'

He turned to head for the plane. 'By the way, the dollar offer still stands.'

Monk produced two formal letters and held them up. 'What about these?'

'Oh, burn them, dear boy. The file wasn't forged but they were. Didn't want a chap who folds, don't you see?'

He was halfway to the aircraft with the stewardess trotting beside him when they heard a shout from behind.

'You, sir, are a cunning old bastard.'

The girl looked up at him, shocked. He smiled down.

'One does hope so,' he said.

On his return to London Sir Nigel Irvine threw himself into a week of extremely high-pressure activity.

With Jason Monk, he had liked what he had seen, and the narration of his former boss Carey Jordan had been impressive. But ten years is a long time to be out of the game.

Things had changed. Russia had changed out of all recognition from the old USSR that Monk had briefly known and duped. Technology had changed, almost every placename had reverted from its Communist title

back to the old pre-revolutionary name. Dumped into modern Moscow without the most intensive briefing, Monk could become bewildered by the transformation.

There could be no question of his contacting either the British or American embassies to seek help. These were out of bounds. Yet he would need some place to hide, some friend in need.

Other things in Russia remained much the same. The country still had its huge internal security service, the FSB, inheritor of the mantle of the KGB's old Second Chief Directorate. Anatoli Grishin might have left the service, but he would assuredly have maintained contacts within it.

Even that was not the principal hazard, which was the pandemic level of corruption. With virtually limitless funds, which Komarov and therefore Grishin seemed to have as the Dolgoruki mafia underpinned their drive for power, there was no level of co-operation from the organs of State that they could not simply buy by bribery.

The plain fact was, hyper-inflation had driven every employee of central government into moonlighting for the highest bidder. Enough money could buy complete co-operation from any State security organization or a private army of special forces soldiers.

Add to that Grishin's own Black Guards and the thousands of fanatical Young Combatants, plus the invisible street army of the underworld itself, and Komarov's doberman would have an army out to track down the man who had come to challenge him.

Of one thing the old spymaster was certain: Anatoli Grishin would not long be ignorant of the return of Monk to his private turf, and he would not be pleased.

The first thing Irvine did was to assemble a small but trustworthy and thoroughly professional team of former soldiers from Britain's own special forces.

After decades fighting IRA terrorism within the United Kingdom, declared wars in the Falklands and the Gulf, a score of undeclared wars from Borneo to Oman, from Africa to Colombia and deep-penetration

succeeded to the title of Lord Forbes, premier lord of Scotland. After a number of calls to Scotland, Irvine finally tracked him down at the Army and Navy Club in London's Pall Mall.

'I know it's a long shot,' he said when he had reintroduced himself, 'but I need to conduct a little seminar. Rather private, really. Very private.'

'Oh, that kind of seminar.'

'Exactly. One is looking for somewhere out of the way, a bit off the beaten track, capable of hosting about a dozen people. You know the Highlands. Anywhere you can think of?'

'When would you want it?' asked the Scottish peer.

'Tomorrow.'

'Ah, like that. My own place is no good, it's rather small. I long ago made over the castle to my lad. But I think he's away. Let me check.'

He called back in an hour. His 'lad', son and heir Malcolm, bearing the courtesy handle Master of Forbes, was in fact fifty-three that year and had confirmed he was leaving the following day for a month in the Greek islands.

'I suppose you'd better borrow his place,' said Lord Forbes, 'no rough stuff, mind.'

'Certainly not,' said Irvine. 'Just lectures, slide shows, that sort of thing. Every expense will be fully covered, and more.'

'All right, then. I'll call Mrs McGillivray and tell her you're coming. She'll look after you.'

With that Lord Forbes put down the phone and went back to his interrupted lunch.

It was dawn on the sixth day when the British Airways overnight from Miami touched down at Heathrow's Terminal Four and decanted Jason Monk among 400 other passengers into the world's busiest airport. Even at that hour there were thousands of passengers arriving from various points on the globe and heading for passport control. Monk had been in first class and was among the earliest to reach the barrier.

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'Business or pleasure, sir?' asked the passport officer.

'Tourism,' said Monk.

'Enjoy your stay.'

Monk pocketed his passport and headed for the luggage carousel. There was a ten-minute wait until the bags rolled off. His own was within the first twenty. He walked through the Green Channel and was not stopped. As he emerged he glanced at the waiting crowd, many of them chauffeurs holding up cards with names of individual passengers or companies. Nothing said 'Monk'.

With people coming up behind him he had to move on. Still nothing. He moved between the twin lines of barriers that formed a passageway to the main concourse and, as he emerged, a voice in his ear said: 'Mr Monk?'

The speaker was about thirty, in jeans and tan leather jacket. He was short-haired and looked extremely fit.

'That's me.'

'Your passport, sir, if you please.'

Monk produced it and the man checked his identity. He had 'ex-soldier' written all over him and, looking at the hammer-knuckled hands holding his passport, Monk would have taken any bet the man's military career had not been spent in the pay/accounts section. The passport was handed back.

'My name's Ciaran. Please follow me.'

Instead of heading for a parked car, the guide took Monk's case and headed for the courtesy shuttle bus. They sat in silence as the coach took them to Terminal One.

'We're not going to London?' asked Monk.

'No, sir. We're going to Scotland.'

Ciaran had the tickets for both. An hour later the London-Aberdeen businessmen's flight took off for the Highlands. Ciaran buried himself in his own copy of the *Army Quarterly and Defence Review*. Whatever else he could do, smalltalk was not his forte. Monk accepted his second airline breakfast of the morning and caught up on some sleep lost across the Atlantic.

At Aberdeen airport there was transport, a long-base

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Landrover Discovery with another taciturn ex-soldier at the wheel. He and Ciaran exchanged eight syllables which seemed to rank as a pretty long conversation.

Monk had never seen the mountains of the Scottish Highlands, which they entered after leaving the airport on the outskirts of the east-coast city of Aberdeen. The unnamed driver took the A96 Inverness road and, seven miles later, pulled off to the left. The signpost said simply: Kemnay. They went through the village of Monymusk to hit the Aberdeen-Alford road. Three miles later the Landrover turned right, ran through Whitehouse, and headed for Keig.

There was a river on the right. Monk wondered if there were salmon or trout in it. Just before Keig the vehicle suddenly pulled off the road, drove over the river and up a drive. Round two bends the stone bulk of an ancient castle sat on a slight eminence looking out over the hills. The driver turned and spoke.

'Welcome to Castle Forbes, Mr Monk.'

The spare figure of Sir Nigel Irvine, a flat cloth cap on his head, white wings of hair blowing either side, came out of the stone porch.

'Good trip?' he asked.

'Fine.'

'Tiring all the same. Ciaran will show you to your room. Have a bath and a nap. Lunch in two hours. We've a lot of work to do.'

'You knew I was coming,' said Monk.

'Yes.'

'Ciaran made no phone call.'

'Ah, yes, see what you mean. Mitch there - pointed at the driver unloading the suitcase, 'was Heathrow. And on the Aberdeen plane. Right back. Got through Aberdeen airport before you, have to wait for luggage. Reached the Landrover five minutes to spare.'

Monk sighed. He had not ~~spot~~ Heathrow or on the plane. The ~~bad~~ was right; there ~~was~~ a lot of work ~~to~~

waistline. He was wrong. Before dawn the next morning he had his first cross-country run with Ciaran and Mitch.

'We'll start with an easy one, Boss,' said Mitch, so they did only five miles through thigh-deep heather. At first Monk thought he was going to die. Then he wished he would.

There were only two staff on duty. The housekeeper, the formidable Mrs McGillivray, widow of an estate worker, cooked and cleaned, accepting with a disapproving sniff the series of experts coming and going with their English accents. Hector looked after the grounds and the vegetable garden, motoring into Whitehouse for groceries. No tradesman ever called. Mrs McGee, as the men called her, and Hector lived in two small cottages in the grounds.

A photographer came and took a range of pictures of Monk for the various identification papers being prepared for him somewhere else. A hair-stylist-cum-make-up man appeared, skilfully changing Monk's appearance and showing him how to do so again with minimum materials and nothing that could not be easily bought or carried in luggage without anyone suspecting the true use of the item.

When his appearance had been changed, the photographer took more pictures for yet another passport. From somewhere Irvine had obtained the real things, and the services of an engraving artist and calligrapher to alter them to the new identity.

Monk spent hours with a huge map of Moscow, memorizing the city and its hundreds of new names - new to him, anyway. Maurice Thorez Quay, named after the dead French Communist leader, had reverted to its old name of Sofiskaya Quay. All references to Marx, Engels, Lenin, Dzerzhinsky and the other Communist notables of their day had vanished.

He memorized the hundred most prominent buildings and their locations, how to use the new telephone system and how to hail an instant 'taxi' by waving down any driver any time, anywhere and offering him a dollar.

'But dinna fash yoursel, for you'll not succeed.'

He was right. Monk approached, feinted and then lunged. The Highlands turned upside down and he found himself on his back.

'A wee bit slow to block me there,' said the ex-WO1.

Hector was in the kitchen depositing some fresh-dug carrots for lunch when Monk, upside down again, went past the window.

'What on earth are they doing?' he asked.

'Away with you,' said Mrs McGee. 'It's just the young laird's gentlemen friends enjoying themselves.'

Out in the woods, Sims introduced Monk to the Swiss-made Sig Sauer 9-mm automatic.

'Thought you guys used the Browning 13-shot,' said Monk, hoping to demonstrate his inside knowledge.

'Used to, but that was years ago. Changed to this over ten years back. Now, you know the two-handed hold and the crouch, sir?'

Monk had had small-arms training back at 'the Farm', Fort Peary in Virginia, when he was a sprog with the CIA. He had been top of his class, the inheritance of hunting with his Dad in the Blue Ridge Mountains as a boy. But that, too, was a long time back.

The Scot set up a target of a crouching man, walked fifteen paces, turned and blew five holes in the heart. Monk took off the crouching figure's left ear and creased his thigh. They used a hundred rounds twice a day for three days until finally Monk could put three out of five rounds into the face.

'That usually slows them up,' admitted Sims, in the tone of one who knew he would not get anything better.

'With luck I'll never have to use one of these damn things,' said Monk.

'Aye, sir, that's what they all say. Then the luck runs out. Best to know how, if you have to.'

At the start of the third week Monk was introduced to his communicator. A surprisingly young man called Danny came up from London.

'It's a perfectly ordinary laptop computer,' he

'Now, the laptop is powered by a lithium-ion battery with enough power to reach the satellite. Even if you have mains power available, use the battery in case of a drop or surge in the domestic current. Use the mains to recharge the battery. Now, switch it on.'

He pointed to the power/off switch and Monk pressed it.

'Type your message to Sir Nigel onto the screen, in clear language.'

Monk typed a twenty-word message to confirm safe arrival and first contact made.

'Now touch this key here. It says something different, but it gives the order to encode.'

Monk touched the key. Nothing happened. His words stayed on the screen.

'Now touch power/off.'

The words vanished.

'They have vanished for ever,' said Danny. 'They have been completely memory-erased. In the code of a one-time pad, they are inside Virgil the Visa, waiting to be transmitted. Now switch the laptop back on again.'

Monk did so. The screen illuminated but remained blank.

'Touch this one. It says something else, but when Virgil is inserted it means "transmit/receive". Now, you just leave it on. Twice a day a satellite will swing over the horizon. As it approaches the place you are in, it is programmed to beam a message downwards. The down-call is on the same frequency as Virgil, but it takes a nano-second and it's in code. What it is saying is: "Are you there, Baby?" Virgil hears this call, identifies Mother, acknowledges and transmits your message. We call it handshaking.'

'That's it?'

'Not quite. If Mother has a message for Virgil, *she* will transmit. Virgil will receive it, all in the one-time pad code. The Mother passes over the horizon and vanishes. She will already have passed on your message to the receiving base, wherever that may

be. I don't know and I don't need to know.'

'Do I have to stay with the machine while it does all this?' asked Monk.

'Certainly not. You can be out and about. When you come back, you find the screen still glowing. Just touch this button. It doesn't say "decrypt", but that's what it does if Virgil is inside there. What Virgil will do is decode your message from home. Learn it, hit power/off and you erase it. For ever.

'Now, one last thing. If you really want to blow Virgil's little brain to pieces, you hit these four numbers in sequence.' He showed Monk the four, written on a slip of card. 'So never punch in those four numbers unless you want to return Virgil to just a Visacard with no other function.'

They spent two days going through the procedures over and over again, until Monk was touch-perfect. Then Danny left, for whatever world of silicon chips he dwelt in.

By the end of the third week at Castle Forbes, all the instructors pronounced themselves satisfied.

Monk saw them leave.

'Is there a phone I could use?' said Monk that evening as he, Ciaran and Mitch sat in the drawing-room after supper.

Mitch looked up from the chessboard where he was being trounced by Ciaran and nodded towards the telephone in the corner.

'A private one,' said Monk.

Ciaran also raised his head and both former soldiers looked at him.

'Sure,' said Ciaran, 'use the one in the study.'

Monk sat among the books and the hunting prints in Lord Forbes's private den and dialled an overseas number. It rang in a small frame house in Crozet, South Virginia, where the sun was low over the Blue Ridge Mountains, five hours behind Scotland. Someone answered at the tenth ring and a woman's voice said, 'Hallo?'

He could imagine the small but cosy sitting-room where a log fire would burn through the winter and the light always gleamed from the surfaces of her cherished and highly polished wedding furniture.

'Hi, Mom, it's Jason.'

The frail voice rose with pleasure. 'Jason. Where are you, son?'

'I've been travelling, Mom. How's Dad?'

Since the stroke, his father had spent much of his time in his rocking-chair out on the stoop, staring at the small town and the forested mountains beyond where, forty years earlier and able to trek all day, he had taken his first-born son hunting and fishing.

'He's fine. He's dozing on the porch right now. It's hot. It's been a long, hot summer. I'll tell him you called. He'll be pleased. Will you be coming to visit soon? It's been so long.'

There were two brothers and a sister, long gone from the small home, one insurance assessor, the other a real estate broker along the Chesapeake and his sister was married to a country doctor. All in Virginia. They visited frequently. He was the absent one.

'Soon as I can make it, Mom. That's a promise.'

'You're going away again, aren't you, son?'

He knew what she meant by 'away'. She had known about Vietnam before the posting came through, and used to call him in Washington before the foreign journeys as if she suspected something she could not possibly know. Something about mothers . . . 3,000 miles and she could sense the danger.

'I'll be back. Then I'll come and visit.'

'Take care of yourself, Jason.'

He held the phone and stared through the windows at the stars over Scotland. He should have gone home more. They were both old now. He should have made the time. If he came back from Russia he would make the time.

'I'll be fine, Mom, I'll be fine.'

There was a pause, as if neither knew what to say.

put it back. There was a quick chalk mark on each case, and he turned to his next customer.

Monk took his bags, passed through the glass doors and emerged into the land to which he had sworn he would never return.

PART TWO

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Hotel Metropol was still where he remembered it, a big cube of grey stone facing the Bolshoi Theatre across the square.

In the reception area Monk approached the desk, introduced himself and offered his American passport. The clerk checked a computer screen, tapping in the numbers and letters until the confirmation flashed up on the screen. He glanced at the passport, then at Monk, nodded and gave a professional smile.

Monk's room was the one he had asked for, acting on the advice of the Russian-speaking soldier Sir Nigel had sent to Moscow four weeks earlier on a reconnaissance trip. It was a corner room on the eighth floor, with a view towards the Kremlin and, more importantly, a balcony that ran along the length of the building.

Owing to the time difference with London, it was early evening by the time he was settled in and already the October dusk was cold enough for those on the street who could afford an overcoat to wear one. That night Monk dined inside the hotel and slept early.

The following morning there was a new reception clerk on duty.

'I have a problem,' Monk told him. 'I have to go to the US embassy for them to check my passport. It's a minor matter, you know, bureaucracy . . .'

'Unfortunately, sir, we have to retain visitors' passports during their stay,' said the clerk.

Monk leaned across the desk and the hundred-dollar bill crinkled in his fingers.

'I understand,' he said soberly, 'but you see, that's the problem. After Moscow I have to travel widely across Europe, and with the passport close to its expiration date, my embassy needs to prepare a replacement. I'd only be gone a couple of hours . . .'

took one, by now speaking fluent Russian.

'Olympic Penta,' he said. The driver knew the hotel, nodded and set off.

The entire Olympic complex, built for the 1980 games, lies due north of the centre of the city, just outside the Sadovo-Spasskoye or garden ring road. The stadium still towered over the surrounding buildings, and in its shadow was the German-built Penta Hotel. Monk had himself deposited under the marquee, paid off the cab and entered the lobby. When the cab was gone he left the hotel and walked the rest of the way. It was only a quarter of a mile.

The whole area south of the stadium had degenerated into that atmosphere of drabness that prevails when upkeep and maintenance become too much trouble. The Communist-era blocks carried a patina of summer dust that would turn to crust in the coming cold. Bits of paper and styrofoam fluttered along the streets.

Just off Durova Street was a railed enclave whose gardens and buildings showed a different spirit, one of care and attention. There were three principal buildings within the railings: a hostel for wayfarers visiting from the provinces, a very fine school built in the mid-1990s and the place of worship itself.

Moscow's principal mosque had been built in 1905, a dozen years before Lenin struck, and it bore the stamp of pre-revolutionary elegance. For seventy years under Communism it had languished, like the Christian churches persecuted on the orders of the atheist State. After the fall of Communism a generous gift from Saudi Arabia had enabled a five-year programme of enlargement and restoration. The hostel and school dated from the mid-1990s programme.

The mosque had not changed in size; it was a quite small edifice in pale blue and white, with tiny windows, and was entered through a pair of antique carved oak doors. Monk slipped off his shoes, put them in one of the pigeonholes to the left of the lobby and went in.

As with all mosques, the interior was completely open

and devoid of chairs or benches. Rich carpets, also donated by Saudi Arabia, covered the floor; pillars held up a gallery that ran round the building above the central space.

According to the faith, there were no graven images or paintings. Panels on the walls contained various quotations from the Koran.

The mosque served the spiritual needs of Moscow's resident Muslim community, excluding the diplomats who mainly worshipped at the Saudi embassy. But Russia contains tens of millions of Muslims, and its capital has two public mosques. As it was not a Friday, there were only a few dozen worshippers.

Monk found a place against the wall near the entrance, sat crosslegged and watched. Mainly the men were old; Azeris, Tartars, Ingush, Ossetian. They all wore suits, frayed but clean.

After half an hour an old man in front of Monk rose from his knees and turned towards the door. He noticed Monk and an expression of curiosity crossed his face. The suntanned face, the blond hair, the lack of a string of prayer-beads. He hesitated, then sat down with his back to the wall.

He must have been well over seventy and three medals won in the Second World War dangled from his lapel.

'Peace be unto you,' he murmured.

'And to you be peace,' Monk replied.

'Are you of the faith?' asked the old man.

'Alas, no; I come seeking a friend.'

'Ah. A particular friend?'

'Yes, one of long ago. We lost contact. I hoped I might find him here. Or someone who might know him.'

The old man nodded. 'Ours is a small community. Many small communities. Which one would he belong to?'

'He is a Chechen,' said Monk. The old man nodded again, then climbed stiffly to his feet.

'Wait,' he said.

He came back ten minutes later, having found

someone outside. He nodded in the direction of Monk, smiled and left. The newcomer was younger, but not much.

'I am told you seek one of my brothers,' said the Chechen. 'Can I help?'

'Possibly,' said Monk. 'I would be grateful. We met years ago. Now I am visiting your city I would be happy to see him again.'

'And his name, my friend?'

'Unar Gunayev.'

Something flickered in the older man's eyes. 'I know of no such man,' he said.

'Ah, then I shall be disappointed,' said Monk, 'for I had brought him a gift.'

'How long will you be among us?'

'I would like to sit here a while longer and admire your beautiful mosque,' replied Monk.

The Chechen rose. 'I will ask if anyone has heard of this man,' he said.

'Thank you,' said Monk. 'I am a man of great patience.'

'Patience is a virtue.'

It was two hours before they came, and there were three of them, all young. They moved quietly, stockinged feet making no sound on the deep pile of the Persian rugs. One stayed by the door, dropping to his knees and leaning back on his heels, hands on the tops of his thighs. He might seem to be at prayer, but Monk knew no-one would get past him.

The other two walked over and sat either side of Monk. Whatever they carried under their jackets was hidden. Monk stared ahead. The questions, when they came, were murmurs that would not disturb the worshippers in front of them.

'You speak Russian?'

'Yes.'

'And you ask about one of our brothers?'

'Yes.'

'You are a Russian spy.'

'I am American. There is a passport in my jacket.'

'Forefinger and thumb,' said the man. Monk eased out his US passport and let it fall to the carpet. It was the other man who leaned forward, retrieved it and scanned the pages. Then he nodded and handed it back. He spoke in Chechen across Monk. The American suspected the burden of what he said was to the effect that anyone can have a forged American passport. The man to Monk's right nodded and resumed.

'Why do you seek our brother?'

'We met, long ago. In a faraway land. He left something behind. I promised myself that if ever I came to Moscow I would return it to him.'

'You have it with you?'

'In that attaché case.'

'Open.'

Monk flicked the catches on the case and lifted the lid. Inside was a flat cardboard box.

'You expect us to bring this to him?'

'I would be grateful.'

The one on the left said something else in Chechen.

'No, it is not a bomb,' said Monk in Russian. 'For if it were, and it were opened now, I also would die. So open it.'

The two men glanced at each other, then one leaned forward and lifted the lid of the cardboard box. They stared at what lay inside.

'That is it?'

'That is it. He left it behind.'

The one on his left closed the box and lifted it out of the attaché case. Then he rose.

'Wait,' he said.

The man by the door watched him leave but made no sign. Monk and his two minders sat for another two hours. The hour of lunch had come and gone. Monk felt the yearning for a big hamburger. Beyond the small windows the light was fading by the time the messenger returned. He said nothing, just nodded to his two companions and jerked his head towards the door.

'Come,' said the Chechen who squatted to Monk's right. All three rose. In the lobby they recovered their shoes and put them on. The two flankers took up position on either side; the watcher by the door brought up the rear. Monk was marched out of the compound to Durova Street where a big BMW waited at the curb. Before he was allowed to enter it he was expertly fished from behind.

Monk went into the centre of the back seat with a flanker on either side. The third man slipped into the front beside the driver. The BMW moved off and headed for the ring road.

Monk had calculated the men would never enter the mosque by offering violence within it, but that even so was a different matter, and he knew enough of men like those around him to be aware they were all extremely dangerous.

After a mile the one in the front reached into the front compartment and withdrew a pair of wrap-around dark glasses. He gestured to Monk to put them on. They were better than a blindfold, for the lenses had been painted black. Monk completed the journey in darkness.

In the heart of Moscow, down a side street that it is wiser not to penetrate, is a small café called the *Yak*. It means 'chestnut' in Russian and has been there for years.

Any tourist, wandering idly towards the door, will be met by a fit-looking young man who will inform the stranger that he would be advised to take his evening coffee elsewhere. The Russian *militsia* do not even bother to go near it.

Monk was helped out of the car and his black glasses were removed as he was led through the door. As he entered, the buzz of conversation in the Chechen language died. Two score eyes watched in silence as he was led to a private room at the back, beyond the bar. If he failed to come out of that room, no one would have seen a thing.

There was a table, four chairs and a mirror on the wall,

From a nearby kitchen came a smell of garlic, spices and coffee. For the first time the senior of the three minders, the one who had sat by the entrance of the mosque while his subordinates did the questioning, spoke.

'Sit,' he said. 'Coffee?'

'Thank you. Black. Sugar.'

It came and it was good. Monk sipped the steaming liquid and kept his eyes away from the mirror, convinced it was a one-way device and that he was being studied from behind it. As he put down his empty cup a door opened and Umar Gunayev entered.

He had changed. The shirt collar was no longer worn outside the jacket, and the suit was not of cheap cut. It was of an Italian designer label and the tie of heavy silk, probably from Jermyn Street or Fifth Avenue.

The Chechen had matured over twelve years, but at forty was darkly handsome, urbane and polished. He nodded several times at Monk, with a quiet smile, then sat down and put the flat cardboard box on the table.

'I received your gift,' he said. He flicked the lid open, and picked out the contents, holding the *Yemeni gambiah* to the light and running a fingertip down the cutting edge.

'This is it?'

'One of them left it on the cobblestones,' said Monk. 'I thought you might use it for a letter-opener.'

This time Gunayev smiled with genuine amusement. 'How did you know my name?'

Monk told him about the mug-shots the British in Oman collected of the incoming Russians.

'And since then, what have you heard?'

'Many things.'

'Good or bad?'

'Interesting.'

'Tell me.'

'I heard that Captain Gunayev, after ten years with the First Chief Directorate, finally became tired of the racial jokes and having no chance of promotion. I heard he left the KGB to take up another line

of work. Also covert, but different.'

Gunayev laughed. At this the three minders seemed to relax. The master had set the mood for them:

'Covert, but different. Yes, that is true. And then?'

'Then I heard that Umar Gunayev had risen in his new life to become the undisputed overlord of all the Chechen underworld west of the Urals.'

'Possibly. Anything else?'

'I heard that this Gunayev is a traditional man, though not old. That he still clings to the ancient standards of the Chechen people.'

'You have heard much, my American friend. And what are these standards of the Chechen people?'

'I have been told that in a world of degeneracy the Chechens still abide by their code of honour; that they pay their debts, the good and the bad.'

There was tension from the three men behind Monk. Was the American making fun of them? They watched their leader. Gunayev nodded at last.

'You have heard correctly. What do you want of me?'

'Shelter. A place to live.'

'There are hotels in Moscow.'

'Not very safe.'

'Someone is trying to kill you?'

'Not yet, but soon.'

'Who?'

'Colonel Anatoli Grishin.'

Gunayev shrugged dismissively.

'You know him?' asked Monk.

'I know of him.'

'And what you know, you like?'

Gunayev shrugged again. 'He does what he does. I do what I do.'

'In America,' said Monk, 'if you wished to disappear, I could make you disappear. But this is not my city, not my country. Can you make me disappear in Moscow?'

'Temporarily or permanently?'

Monk laughed. 'I should prefer temporarily.'

'Then of course I can. That is what you want?'

'If I am to stay alive, yes. And I would prefer to stay alive.'

Gunayev rose and addressed his three gangsters. 'This man saved my life. Now he is my guest. No-one will touch him. While he is here he will become one of us.'

The three hoods were all round Monk, offering their hands, grinning, giving their names. Aslan, Magomed, Sharif.

'Has the hunt for you begun already?' asked Gunayev.

'No, I don't think so.'

'Then you must be hungry. The food here is foul. We will go to my office.'

Like all mafia chieftains, the leader of the Chechen clan had two personae. The more public one was that of a highly successful *biznizman* controlling a score of prosperous companies. In the case of Gunayev his chosen speciality was that of property.

In the early years he had simply bought prime development sites all over Moscow by the simple expedient of purchasing or shooting the bureaucrats who, as Communism collapsed and State property became available for public purchase, had the sales of these prime sites in their gift.

With the development sites converting to his own title, Gunayev was able to take advantage of the wave of collaborative planning ventures set up between the Russian tycoons and their Western partners. Gunayev provided the building sites and guaranteed strike-free labour, while the Americans and West Europeans erected their office blocks and skyscrapers. Ownership then became a shared venture, as did the profits and rents from the office blocks.

With similar procedures, the Chechen took over control of six of the top hotels in the city, branching out into steel, concrete, timber, bricks and glazing. If one wanted to restore, convert or build, one dealt with a subsidiary owned and controlled by Umar Gunayev.

That was the overt face of the Chechen mafia. The less visible side of the operation, as with all Moscow

gangsterdom, remained in the provinces of black marketeering and embezzlement.

Russian State assets such as gold, diamonds, gas and oil were simply purchased locally in roubles, at the official rate and even then at knockdown prices. The 'sellers', being bureaucrats, could all be bought anyway. Exported abroad, the assets were sold for dollars, pounds or Deutschmarks at world market prices.

A fraction of the sale price could then be reimported, converted into a blizzard of roubles at the unofficial rate and used to purchase the next consignment and pay the necessary bribes. The balance, in the region of 80 per cent of the foreign sale, was the profit.

In the early days, before some of the State officials and bankers got the hang of things, a number refused to co-operate. The first warning was verbal, the second involved orthopaedic surgery and the third was permanent. The successor official to the one who had shuffled off the mortal coil usually grasped the game rules.

By the late 1990s violence against members of officialdom or the legitimate professions was hardly ever necessary, but by then the growth of private armies meant that every underworld chieftain had to match all his rivals if need be. Among all men of violence none matched the speed and unconcern of the Chechens if they felt they were being crossed.

From the late winter of 1994 a new factor had entered the equation. Just before Christmas that year Boris Yeltsin launched his incredibly foolish war against the homeland of Chechnya, ostensibly to oust the breakaway President Dudayev, who was claiming independence. If the war had been a quick surgical operation, it might have worked. In fact, the supposedly mighty Russian army received a pasting from lightly armed Chechen guerrillas, who simply took to the mountains of the Caucasus and fought on.

In Moscow any semblance of hesitation the Chechen mafia might have felt towards the Russian State vanished. Ordinary life for a law-abiding Chechen

became almost impossible. With every man's hand turned against them, the Chechens became a tightly knit and fiercely loyal clan within the Russian capital, far more impenetrable than the Georgian, Armenian or native Russian underworlds. Within that community the head of the underworld became both a hero and a resistance leader. In the late autumn of 1999 this was the former captain of the KGB, Umar Gunayev.

And yet as Businessman Gunayev he could still circulate freely and live like the multi-millionaire he was. His 'office' was in fact the entire top floor of one of his hotels, a collaboration with an American chain, situated near the Helsinki station.

The journey to the hotel was accomplished in Umar Gunayev's Mercedes limousine, proofed against bullet and bomb. He had his own driver and bodyguard, and the three from the café came behind in the Volvo. Both cars drove into the underground car park of the hotel and, after the basement had been searched by the three from the Volvo, Gunayev and Monk walked to a high-speed lift which took them to the tenth and penthouse floor. The electric power to the elevator was then disconnected.

There were more guards in the lobby on the tenth floor, but they finally found privacy in the Chechen leader's apartment. A white-jacketed steward brought food and drink at a command from Gunayev.

'There is something I have to show you,' said Monk. 'I hope you will find it interesting, even educational.'

He opened his attaché case and activated the two control buttons to release the false base. Gunayev watched with interest. The case and its potential clearly excited his admiration.

Monk handed over the Russian translation of the Verification report first. It comprised thirty-three pages between grey cartridge-paper covers. Gunayev raised an eyebrow.

'Must I?'

'It will reward your patience. Please.'

Gunayev sighed and began to read. As he became more involved in the narrative, he left his coffee untouched and concentrated on the text. It took twenty minutes. Finally he put the report back on the table between them.

'So this manifesto is no joke. The real thing. So what?'

'This is your next president talking,' said Monk. 'This is what he intends to do when he has the power to do it. Quite soon now.'

He slipped the black-covered manifesto across the table.

'Another thirty pages?'

'Forty, actually. But even more interesting. Please Humour me.'

Gunayev ran his eye quickly over the first ten pages, taking in the plans for the single-party State, the re-commissioning of the nuclear arsenal, the reconquest of the lost republics and the new Gulag archipelago of slave camps. Then his eyes narrowed and he slowed his pace.

Monk knew the point he had reached. He could envisage the messianic sentences as he had first read them before the sparkling water of Sapodilla Bay in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

'The final and complete extermination of every last Chechen on the face of Russia . . . the destruction of the rat-people so that they will never rise again . . . the reduction of the tribal homeland to a wild-goat pasture . . . not a brick on brick nor a stone on stone . . . for ever . . . the surrounding Ossetians, Dagomans and Ingush will watch the process and learn due and proper respect and fear of their new Russian masters . . .'

Gunayev read to the end and put the manifesto down. 'It's been tried before,' he said. 'The tsars tried, Stalin tried, Yeltsin tried.'

'With swords, tommy-guns, rockets. What about gamma rays, anthrax, nerve gases? The art of extermination has modernized.'

Gunayev rose, stripped off his jacket, draped it over his chair and walked to the picture window

with its view over the roofs of Moscow.

'You want him eliminated? Taken down?' he asked.

'No.'

'Why not? It can be done.'

'It won't work.'

'It usually does.'

Monk explained. A nation already in chaos, plunged into the abyss, probably civil war. Or another Komarov, perhaps his own right-hand man, Grishin, storming to power on a wave of outrage.

'They are two sides of a coin,' he said. 'The man of thought and words, and the man of action. Kill one and the other takes over. The destruction of your people continues.'

Gunayev turned from the window and walked back. He leaned over Monk, his face taut.

'What do you want of me, American? You come here as a stranger who once saved my life. So, for that I owe you. Then you show me this filth. What has it to do with me?'

'Nothing, unless you decide so. You have many things, Umar Gunayev. You have great wealth, enormous power, even the power of life and death over any man. You have the power to walk away, to let what will happen happen.'

'And why should I not?'

'Because there was a boy, once. A small and ragged boy who grew up in a poor village in the northern Caucasus among family, friends and neighbours, who clubbed together to send him to university and thence to Moscow to become a great man. The question is: did that boy die somewhere along the road, to become an automaton, triggered only by wealth? Or does the boy still remember his own people?'

'You tell me.'

'No, the choice is yours.'

'And your choice, American?'

'Much easier. I can walk out of here, take a cab to Sheremetyevo, fly home. It's warm there, comfortable,

safe. I can tell them not to bother; that it doesn't matter, that no-one over here cares any more, they're all bought and paid for. Let night descend.'

The Chechen seated himself and stared into some distance long past. Finally he said, 'You think you can stop him?'

'There is a chance.'

'And then what?'

Monk explained what Sir Nigel Irvine and his patrons had in mind.

'You're crazy,' said Gunayev flatly.

'Maybe. What else faces you? Komarov and the genocide carried out by his beastmaster; chaos and civil war; or the other.'

'And if I help you, what do you need?'

'To hide. But in plain sight. To move but not be recognized. To see the people I have come to see.'

'You think Komarov will know you are here?'

'Quite soon. There are a million informants in this city. You know that. You use many yourself. All can be bought. The man is no fool.'

'He can buy all the organs of the State. Even I never take on the entire State.'

'As you will have read, Komarov has promised his partners and financial backers, the Dolgoruki mafia, the world and all that therein is. Soon now, they will be the State. What happens to you?'

'All right. I can hide you. Though for how long even I do not know. Inside our community no-one will find you, until I say so. But you cannot live here. It is too obvious. I have many safe-houses. You will have to pass from one to the other.'

'Safe-houses are fine,' said Monk. 'To sleep in. To move about, I will need papers. Perfectly forged ones.'

Gunayev shook his head. 'We don't forge papers here. We buy the real thing.'

'I forgot. Everything is for money.'

'What else do you need?'

'To start with, these.'

Monk wrote several lines on a sheet of paper and handed it over. Gunayev ran his eye down the list. Nothing was a problem. He reached the last item.

'What the hell do you need that for?'

Monk explained.

'You know that I own half the Metropol Hotel,' Gunayev sighed.

'I'll try and just use the other half.'

The Chechen failed to see the joke.

'How long until Grishin knows you are in town?'

'It depends. About two days, maybe three. When I start to move about, there are bound to be some traces left. People talk.'

'All right. I will give you four men. They will watch your back, move you from place to place. The leader is one you have met. In the front seat of the Volvo, Magomed. He's good. Give a list of what you need from time to time to him. It will be provided. And I still think you are crazy.'

By midnight Monk was back in his room at the Metropol. At the end of the corridor was an open area by the elevators. There were four leather club chairs. Two of them were occupied by silent men who read newspapers and would do so all night. In the small hours of the morning two suitcases were delivered to Monk's room.

Most Muscovites and certainly all foreigners presume that the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church lives in a sumptuous suite of apartments deep in the heart of the medieval Danilovsky Monastery, with its white crenellated walls and its complex of abbeys and cathedrals.

This is certainly the impression, and it is a carefully cultivated one. In one of the great office buildings within the monastery, guarded by fiercely loyal Cossack soldiers, the Patriarch does indeed keep his offices and these are the heart and centre of the Patriarchate of Moscow and All the Russias. But he does not actually live there.

He lives in a quite modest town house at 5 Chisti Pereulok, meaning 'Clean Lane', a narrow side-street just outside the central district of the city.

Here he is attended by a priestly staff of personal private secretary, valet/butler, two manservants and three nuns, who cook and clean. There is also a driver on call and two Cossack guards. The contrast with the magnificence of the Vatican or the splendour of the palace of the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church could not be greater.

In the winter of 1999 the holder of the office was still His Holiness Alexei II, elected ten years earlier just before the fall of Communism. Still in his early fifties, he became the inheritor of a church demoralized and traduced from within and persecuted and corrupted from without.

From the very earliest days Lenin, who loathed the priesthood, realized that Communism had only one rival for the hearts and minds of the teeming mass of the Russian peasantry, and he determined to destroy it. Through systematic brutality and corruption he and his successors nearly succeeded.

Even Lenin and Stalin baulked at the complete extermination of the priesthood and the Church, fearful they might inspire a backlash not even the NKVD could control. So after the first pogroms in which churches were burned, their treasures stolen and the priests hanged, the Politburo sought to destroy the Church by discrediting it.

The measures were numerous. Aspirants of high intelligence were banned from the seminaries, which were controlled by the NKVD and later the KGB. Only plodders from the periphery of the USSR, Moldavia in the west and Siberia in the east, were accepted. The level of education was kept low and the quality of the priesthood degraded.

Most churches were simply closed and allowed to rot. A few remained open, patronized mainly by the poor and the elderly, i.e. the harmless. The officiating priests were

ed to report regularly to the KGB and did
as informers against their own parishioners.
young person, seeking baptism, would be reported
the priest he approached. After that he would lose his
-school place, his chance at university, and
parents would probably be ousted from their apart-
nt. Virtually nothing went unreported to the KGB.
most the entire priesthood, even if not involved,
came tainted by popular suspicion.
The Communists used the stick-and-carrot tech-
que, a crippling stick and a poisoned carrot.
Defenders of the church point out that the alternative
was complete extirpation, and thus keeping the Church,
any Church, alive was a factor that outweighed the
humiliation.

What the mild, shy and retiring Alexei II inherited,
therefore, was a college of bishops steeped in collabor-
ation with the atheist State and a pastoral priesthood
discredited among the people.

There were exceptions, wandering priests without
parishes who preached and dodged arrest, or failed to do
so and were sent to the labour camps. There were
ascetics who withdrew to the monasteries to keep the
faith alive by self-denial and prayer, but these hardly ever
met the masses of the people.

In the aftermath of the collapse of Communism the
opportunity occurred for a great renaissance, a rebirth
that would put the Church and the word of the Gospel
back at the centre of the lives of the traditionally deep
religious Russian people.

Instead, the turning-back to religion was broug
about by the newer churches, vigorous, vibrant, de
cated and prepared to go and preach to the people wh
they lived and worked. The Pentecostals multipl
the American missionaries poured in with their Bapt
Mormonism and Seventh-Day Adventism. The reac
of the Russian Orthodox leadership was to beg Mo
for a ban on foreign preachers.

Defenders argued that root-and-branch reform

Orthodox hierarchy was impossible because the lower levels were also dross. The seminary-trained priests were of poor calibre, spoke in the archaic language of the scriptures, were possessed of pedantic or didactic speech and had no training in non-academic public delivery. Their sermons were delivered to captive audiences, few in number and elderly in years.

The opportunity missed was vast, for as dialectical materialism was proved a false god and as democracy and capitalism failed to provide for the body, let alone the soul, the appetite for comfort was pan-national and profound. It went largely unanswered.

Instead of sending out its best younger priests on missionary work, to proselytize the faith and spread the word, said the critics, the Orthodox Church sat in bishoprics, monasteries and seminaries waiting for the people. Few came.

If a passionate and inspirational leadership was desperately needed after the fall of Communism, the mild scholar Alexei II was not the man to provide it. His election was a compromise between the various factions among the bishops; Alexei was a man who, the inadequate hierarchs hoped, would not make waves.

Yet despite the burden he inherited and his own personal lack of charisma, Alexei II was not without some reforming instinct, which took courage. He did three important things.

His first reform was to divide the land of Russia into a hundred bishoprics, each being far smaller than hitherto. This enabled him to create new and younger bishops from among the best and most motivated priests, the least tarred by the brush of collaboration with the defunct KGB. Then he visited every see, making himself more visible to the people than any Patriarch in history.

Secondly he silenced the violent anti-Semitic outpourings of Metropolitan Ioann of St Petersburg and made plain that any bishop preferring to offer hatred of Man above love of God as his message to the fa-

would depart his office. Ioann died in 1995, still privately railing against the Jews and Alexei II.

Finally, Alexei gave his personal sanction, over considerable opposition, to Father Gregor Rusakov, the charismatic young priest who steadfastly refused to accept either a parish of his own or the discipline of the bishops through whose territory he moved on his itinerant pastoral mission.

Many a Patriarch would have condemned the maverick monk and forbidden him the pulpit, but Alexei II had refused to take this path, preferring to accept the risk of giving the nomad-priest his head. With his moving and passionate oratory Father Gregor reached out to the young and the agnostic, something that the bishops were failing to do.

One night in early November 1999 the gentlemanly Patriarch was disturbed at his prayers just before midnight with the news that an emissary from London was waiting at the street door and asking for an audience.

The Patriarch was dressed in a plain grey cassock. He rose from his knees and crossed the floor of his small private chapel to take the letter from the hand of his secretary.

The missive was on the headed paper of the London bishopric, based in Kensington, and he recognized the signature of his friend Metropolitan Anthony. Nevertheless he frowned in perplexity that his colleague should contact him in such an unusual way.

The letter was in Russian, which Archbishop Anthony both spoke and wrote. It asked his brother in Christ to receive as a matter of urgency a man who bore news that concerned the Church, disturbing news of great confidentiality.

The Patriarch folded the letter and glanced at his secretary.

'Where is he?'

'On the pavement, Holiness. He came by taxi.'

'He is a priest?'

'Yes, Holiness.'

The Patriarch sighed. 'Let him be admitted. You may return to your sleep. I will see him in my study. In ten minutes.'

The Cossack guard on night-duty received a whispered command from the secretary and reopened the street door. He glanced at the grey taxi from Central City Cabs and the black-clad priest beside it.

'His Holiness will see you, Father,' he said. The priest paid off the cab.

Inside the house he was shown to a small waiting-room. After ten minutes a plump priest entered and murmured, 'Please come with me.'

The visitor was shown into a room that was clearly the study of a scholar. Apart from an icon in a corner of the white plaster walls, the room was adorned only in shelving where row upon row of books gleamed in the light from a table-lamp on a desk. Behind the desk sat Patriarch Alexei. He gestured his guest to a chair.

'Father Maxim, would you bring us refreshments. Coffee? Yes, coffee for two, and some biscuits. You will take communion in the morning, Father? Yes? Then there is just time for a biscuit before midnight.'

The plump valet/butler withdrew.

'So, my son, and how is my friend Anthony of London?'

There was nothing false about the visitor's black cassock or even the black stovepipe hat he had now removed to reveal blond hair. The only odd thing was that he wore no beard. Most Orthodox priests do, but not all the English ones.

'I'm afraid I could not say, Your Holiness, for I have not met him.'

Alexei stared at Monk without comprehension. He gestured at the letter in front of him.

'And this? I do not understand.'

Monk took a deep breath. 'First, Holiness, I have to confess that I am not a priest of the Orthodox Church. Neither is the letter from Archbishop Anthony, though

the paper is genuine and the signature skilfully forged. The purpose of this disrespectful charade is that I had to see you. You personally, in privacy and in conditions of great secrecy.'

The Patriarch's eyes flickered in alarm. Was the man a lunatic? An assassin? There was an armed Cossack guard down below, but could he be summoned in time? He kept his face impassive. His butler would return in a few moments. Perhaps that would be the time to escape.

'Please explain,' he said.

'Firstly, sir, I am by birth an American, not Russian. Secondly, I come from a group of people in the West, discreet and powerful, who wish to help Russia and the Church, not harm either of them. Thirdly, I come only with news that my patrons feel you may believe to be important and troubling. Finally, I come to seek your help, not your blood. You have a phone at your elbow. You may use it to summon help. I will not stop you. But before you denounce me, I beg you to read what I have brought.'

Alexei frowned. Certainly the man did not appear to be a maniac, and he had already had time to kill him. Where was that fool Maxim with his coffee?

'Very well. What is it you have for me?'

Monk reached beneath his cassock and produced two slim folders, which he placed on the desk. The Patriarch glanced at the covers, one grey and the other black.

'What do these concern?'

'The grey one should be read first. It is a report which proves beyond any reasonable doubt that the black file is no forgery, no joke, no hoax, no trick.'

'And the black file?'

'It is the private and personal manifesto of one Igor Viktorovich Komarov, who it appears will soon be President of Russia.'

There was a knock on the door. Father Maxim entered with a tray of coffee, cups and biscuits. The mantle clock struck twelve.

'Too late,' sighed the Patriarch. 'Maxim, you

have deprived me of my biscuit.'

'I am terribly sorry, Holiness. The coffee . . . I had to grind fresh . . . I . . .'

'I am only jesting, Maxim.' He glanced at Monk. The man appeared hard and fit. If he was going to commit murder, he could probably kill them both. 'Away to your bed, Maxim. May God give you good rest.'

The butler shuffled towards the door.

'Now,' said the Patriarch, 'what does Komarov's manifesto tell us?'

Father Maxim closed the door behind him, hoping no-one had noticed the start he gave at the mention of Komarov's name. In the corridor he glanced up and down. The secretary was already back in bed, the religious sisters would not appear for hours, the Cossack was downstairs. He knelt by the door and applied his ear to the keyhole.

Alexei II read the Verification report first, as he was asked. Monk sipped his coffee. Finally the Patriarch had finished.

'An impressive story. Why did he do it?'

'The old man?'

'Yes.'

'We shall never know. As you see, he is dead. Murdered beyond any doubt. Professor Kuzmin's report is adamant on that.'

'Poor fellow. I shall pray for him.'

'What we may surmise is that he saw something in these pages that so disturbed him that he risked and finally gave his life to reveal the inner intentions of Igo Komarov. Would Your Holiness now read the Black Manifesto?'

An hour later the Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias leaned back and stared at a point above Monk's head.

'He cannot mean this,' he said finally. 'He cannot intend to do these things. They are satanic. This is Russia on the threshold of the third millenium of Our Lord. We are beyond these things.'

'As a man of God, you must believe in the forces of evil, Holiness?'

'Of course.'

'And that sometimes these forces can take human form? Hitler, Stalin . . .'

'You are a Christian, Mr . . . ?'

'Monk, I suppose so. A bad one.'

'Aren't we all? So inadequate. But then you know the Christian view of evil. You do not need to ask.'

'Holiness, the passages concerning the Jews, the Chechens and the other ethnic minorities apart, these plans would send your Holy Church spinning back into the dark ages, either a willing tool and accomplice or a fellow victim of the fascist State, as godless in its way as the Communist one.'

'If this is true.'

'It is true. Men do not hunt down and kill for a forgery. Colonel Grishin's reaction was too fast for the document not to have come from Secretary Akopov's desk. They would have been unaware of a forgery. They were aware within hours that something of priceless value had gone missing.'

'What have you come to seek of me, Mr Monk?'

'An answer. Will the Orthodox Church of All the Russias oppose this man?'

'I shall pray. I shall seek guidance . . .'

'And if the answer is that - not as a Patriarch but as a Christian, and a man, and a Russian - you have no choice. What then?'

'Then I shall have no choice. But how to oppose him? The presidential elections of January are seen as a foregone conclusion.'

Monk rose, gathered the two files and pushed them inside his cassock. He reached for his hat.

'Holiness, shortly a man will come, also from the West. This is his name. Please receive him. He will propose what can be done.'

He handed over a small pasteboard card.

'Will you need a car?' asked Alexei.

'Thank you, no. I shall walk.'

'May God walk with you.'

Monk left him standing erect beside his icon, a deeply troubled man. As he crossed the floor he thought he heard the rustle of foot on carpet outside, but when he opened the door the passage was empty. Downstairs he met the Cossack who showed him out. The wind on the street was bitter. He pushed his priestly hat firmly onto his head, leaned into the wind and walked back to the Metropol.

Before dawn a plump figure slipped out of the home of the Patriarch and scurried through the streets and into the lobby of the Rossiya. Although he had a portable phone beneath his dark suit, he knew that landlines from public booths were far safer.

The man he spoke to at the house off Kiselnny Boulevard was one of the night guards but he agreed to take a message.

'Tell the Colonel my name is Father Maxim Klimovsky. Got that? Yes, Klimovsky. Tell him I work in the private residence of the Patriarch. I must speak to him. It is urgent. I will phone back on this number at ten this morning.'

He got his connection at that hour. The voice at the other end was quiet but authoritative. 'Yes, Father, this is Colonel Grishin.'

In the booth the plump priest held the receiver in a damp hand, a bead of sweat across his forehead.

'Look, Colonel, you do not know me. But I am a passionate admirer of Igor Viktorovich Komarov. Last night a man came to visit the Patriarch. He brought documents. He referred to one as a Black Manifesto . . . Hallo, hallo, are you there?'

'My dear Father Klimovsky, I think we should meet,' said the voice.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

At the far south-eastern end of Staraya Ploshchad is Slavyansky Square, where stands one of the smallest, oldest and most beautiful churches in Moscow.

All Saints in Kulishki was originally built in the thirteenth century of wood, when Moscow comprised only the Kremlin and a few surrounding acres. After burning down, it was rebuilt in stone in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and remained in constant use until 1918.

Moscow was then still known as the city of twenty-times-twenty churches, for there were over 400 of them. The Communists closed down 90 per cent and destroyed three-quarters. Among those that remained abandoned but otherwise intact was All Saints in Kulishki.

After the fall of Communism in 1991, the little church underwent four years of meticulous restoration at the hands of teams of craftsmen until it reopened as a place of worship.

It was here that Father Maxim Klimovsky came on the day following his phone call. He attracted no attention because he was dressed in the standard full-length black cassock and stovepipe hat of an Orthodox priest, and there were several of them in and around the church.

He took a votive candle, lit it and walked to the wall on the right of the entrance, where he stood contemplating the restored wall paintings as if in prayer and contemplation.

In the centre of the church, which was ablaze with gold and paintings, a resident priest stood chanting the liturgy while a small group in street clothes answered with the responses. But the right-hand wall, behind a series of arches, was unoccupied apart from the single priest.

Father Maxim glanced nervously at his watch. Five

minutes after the appointed hour. He did not know he had been seen from the parked car across the little square, nor had he noticed the three men alight after he entered the building. He did not know they had checked to see if he was being followed; he knew none of these things nor how they were done.

He heard the slight scrape of a shoe on the stone flags behind him and felt the man move into position beside him.

'Father Klimovsky?'

'Yes.'

'I am Colonel Grishin. I believe you have something to tell me.'

The priest glanced sideways. The man was taller than himself, slim, in a dark winter coat. The man turned and looked down at him. The priest met his eyes and was frightened. He hoped he was doing the right thing and would not regret it. He nodded and swallowed.

'First tell me why, Father. Why the phone call?'

'You must understand, Colonel, that I have long been a keen admirer of Igor Komarov. His policies, his plans for Russia – all admirable.'

'How gratifying. And what happened the night before last?'

'A man came to see the Patriarch. I am his valet and butler. The man was dressed as a priest of the Church, but he was blond and wore no beard. His Russian was perfect, but he might have been a foreigner.'

'Was he expected, this foreigner?'

'No. That was so strange. He came unannounced, in the middle of the night. I was in bed. I was told to get up and prepare coffee.'

'So, the stranger was received after all?'

'Yes, that was odd, too. The Western appearance of the man, the hour of his arrival . . . The secretary should have told him to make a formal appointment. No-one just walks in on the Patriarch in the middle of the night. But he seemed to have a letter of introduction.'

'So, you served them coffee.'

'Yes, and as I was leaving I heard his Holiness say: "What does Komarov's manifesto tell us?"'

'And you were intrigued?'

'Yes. So, after closing the door I listened at the keyhole.'

'Very astute. And what did they say?'

'Not a lot. There were long periods of silence. I looked through the keyhole and could see His Holiness was reading something. It took almost an hour.'

'And then?'

'The Patriarch seemed very disturbed. I heard him say something and then use the word "satanic". Then he said: "We are beyond these things." The stranger was talking in a low voice, I could hardly hear him. But I caught the words "the Black Manifesto". They came from the stranger. That was just before His Holiness spent an hour reading . . .'

'Anything else?'

The man, thought Grishin, was a babbler; nervous, sweating in the warmth of the church but not from it. But what he had to say was cogent enough, even though he, the priest, did not understand the significance of it all.

'A little more. I heard the word "forgery" and then your name.'

'Mine?'

'Yes, the stranger said something about your reaction being too fast. Then they talked about an old man and the Patriarch said he would pray for him. They mentioned "evil" several times, then the stranger rose to leave. I had to get down the corridor fast, so I did not see him go. I heard the street door slam, that was all.'

'You saw no car?'

'No. I peered from an upper window, but he left on foot. The next day, I have never seen His Holiness so disturbed. He was pale, spent hours in his chapel. That was how I could get away to call you. I hope I did the right thing.'

'My friend, you did exactly the right thing. There are anti-patriotic forces at work seeking to spread lies about

a great statesman who will soon be the President of Russia. You are a patriotic Russian, Father Klimovsky?

'I long for the day when we can purify Russia from this trash and garbage that Komarov denounces. This foreign filth. That is why I support Komarov with all my heart.'

'Excellent, Father. Believe me, you are one of those whom Mother Russia must look to. I think a great future awaits you. Just one thing. This stranger . . . have you no idea where he came from?'

The candle had burned low. The other worshippers now stood a few yards to their left, gazing at the sacred images and praying.

'No. But though he left on foot, the Cossack guard told me later he came by cab. Central City Cabs, the grey ones.'

A priest, at midnight. Going to Chisti Pereulok. The log would record it. And the pick-up point. Colonel Grishin gripped the upper arm of the cassock beside him, felt his fingers dig in to the soft flesh and the start of the plump priest. He turned Father Klimovsky to face him.

'Now listen, Father. You have done well and in due course will be rewarded. But there is more, you understand?'

Father Klimovsky nodded.

'I want you to keep a record of everything that happens in that house. Who comes, who goes. Especially high-ranking bishops or strangers. When you have something, you call me. Just say "Maxim is calling", and leave a time. That is all. The meetings will be here, at that time. If I need you, I will have a letter delivered by hand. Just a card with a time. If by any chance you cannot make that time without arousing suspicion, just ring and give an alternative. Do you understand?'

'Yes, Colonel. I will do what I can for you.'

'Of course you will. I can see that one day we shall have a new bishop in this land. You had better go now. I shall follow later.'

Colonel Grishin continued to stare at the images he

despised and reflect on what he had been told. That the Black Manifesto had returned to Russia he had no doubt. The cassocked fool would not know what he was talking about, but the words were too accurate.

So someone was back, after months of silence, and circulating quietly, showing the document but not leaving a copy behind. To create enemies, of course. To try to influence events.

Whoever it was, he had miscalculated with the primate. The Church had no power. Grishin recalled with appreciation Stalin's sneer: how many divisions has the Pope? But whoever it was could cause trouble.

On the other hand, the man had retained his copy of the manifesto. Indicating he might have only one or two copies in his possession. The problem was clearly to find him and eliminate him, and in such a manner that not a shred of the stranger or his document would be left.

As it turned out, the problem was much easier than Grishin could have hoped.

On the matter of his new informant, he had no problems. Years in counter-intelligence had taught him to recognize and evaluate informants. The priest, he knew, was a coward who would sell his grandmother for preferment. Grishin had noted the sudden spark of lust when he mentioned elevation to a bishopric.

And something else, he mused as he left the wall paintings and passed between the two men he had stationed just inside the doors. He really must search among the Young Combatants to find a seriously handsome friend for the traitor-priest.

The raid by the four men in black balaclava masks was quick and efficient. When it was over the director of Central City Cabs reckoned it was hardly worth reporting to the militia. In the general lawlessness of Moscow there was nothing the best detective could do to find the raiders, nor would any seriously try. To report that nothing had been stolen and no-one harmed would invite a torrent of form-filling and several wasted days making statements that would gather dust in a file.

The men simply barged into the ground-floor office, closed it down, drew the blinds and demanded to see the manager. As they all had handguns, no-one argued, presuming it was a hold-up for money. But no: all they wanted when they stuck a pistol in the manager's face were the worksheets of three nights previously.

The leader among them studied the sheets until he came to an entry that seemed to interest him. Though the manager could not see the sheets, because he happened to be on his knees facing the corner at the time, the entry referred to a pick-up and a destination logged about midnight.

'Who is driver Fifty-two?' snapped the leader.

'I don't know,' squealed the manager. He was rewarded with a crack alongside the head from a pistol barrel. 'It'll be in the staff file,' he screamed.

They made him get out the staff list. Driver Fifty-two was Vasili. There was an address in the suburbs.

After telling him that if he even let the thought cross his mind of calling Vasili to warn him, he would quickly move from his present accommodation to a long wooden box, the leader tore off a chunk of the worksheet and left.

The manager nursed his head, took an aspirin and gave a thought to Vasili. If the fool was daft enough to cheat men like that, he deserved a visit. Clearly the driver had short-changed someone with an even shorter temper, or been rude to their girlfriend. This was Moscow 1999, he thought; you survived or you made trouble for men with guns. The manager intended to survive. He reopened his office and went back to work.

Vasili was taking a late lunch of sausage and black bread when the doorbell rang. Seconds later his wife came back into the room white-faced with two men behind her. Both had black ski-masks and guns. Vasili opened his mouth and a piece of sausage fell out. 'Look, I'm a poor man, I don't have . . .' he began.

'Shut up,' said one of the men while the other pushed the trembling wife into a chair. Vasili found a torn sheet of paper pushed under his nose.

the next tourist. Out he comes. Black cassock, tall hat. I remember thinking: what's a priest doing in a place like that? He looks up and down the line, then comes straight for me.'

'Alone? Any companion?'

'No. Alone.'

'He gave a name?'

'No, just the address he wanted to go. Paid cash in roubles.'

'Any conversation?'

'Not a word. Just where he wanted to go, then silence. When we got there he said: "Wait here." When he came back from the door, he said: "How much?" That was it. Look, guys, I swear I didn't lay a finger . . .'

'Enjoy your lunch,' said the interrogator and pushed his face in the sausage. Then they left.

Colonel Grishin listened to the report impassively. It could mean nothing. The man came out of the doors of the Metropol at half past eleven. He could be staying there; he could have been visiting; he could have walked right through the lobby from the other entrance. But worth a check.

Grishin maintained a number of informers inside the headquarters building of the Moscow militia. The senior was a major-general on the ruling Praesidium. The most consistently useful was the senior clerk in Records. For this job the one was too high and the other confined to his rows of shelves. The third was a detective-inspector in Homicide, Dmitri Borodin.

The detective entered the hotel just before sundown and asked to see the front office manager, an Austrian who had worked in Moscow for eight years. Borodin flashed his militia pass.

'Homicide?' asked the manager in concern. 'I hope nothing has happened to any of our guests.'

'So far as I know, no. Just routine,' said Borodin. 'I need to see the complete guest list for three nights ago.'

The manager sat in his office and punched up the information on his computer.

'You want it printed out?' asked the Austrian.

'Yes, I like paper lists.'

Borodin began to work his way down the columns. To judge by the names, there were only a dozen Russians among the 600 guests. The rest were from a dozen countries of Western Europe, plus the USA and Canada. The Metropol was expensive; it was for visiting tourists and businessmen. Borodin had been told to look for the title 'Father' preceding a guest's name. He could see none.

'Do you have any priests of the Orthodox Church staying here?' he asked.

The manager was startled. 'No, not so far as I am aware . . . I mean, no-one has checked in as such.'

Borodin scanned all the names without success.

'I'll have to keep the list,' he said at length. The manager was happy to see him go.

It was not until the following morning that Colonel Grishin was able to study the list himself. Just after ten one of the two stewards at the house entered his office with his coffee to find the head of security for the UPF pale and shaking.

He asked timorously if the Colonel was feeling himself, but was waved away with an irritable flick of the hand. When he had gone, Grishin looked at his own two hands on the blotter and tried to stop the shaking. He was no stranger to rage, and when it seized him he came very close to losing control.

The name was on the third page of the printout, halfway down. Dr Philip Peters, American academic.

He knew that name. For ten years he had guarded that name. Twice, ten years earlier, he had scoured the files of the immigration division of the old Second Chief Directorate, to which copies were passed by the Foreign Ministry of every application for a visa to visit the USSR. Twice he had found that name. Twice he had procured and stared at the photo accompanying the application: the tight grey curls, the smoked glasses hiding the weak eyes that were not weak at all.

In the cellars beneath Lefortovo he had shaken those pictures beneath the noses of Kruglov and Professor Blinov, and they had confirmed this was the man who met them covertly in the lavatory of the Museum of Oriental Art and in the cathedral in Vladimir.

Far more than twice he had sworn that if the man who bore that face and pseudonym ever came back to Russia he would settle accounts.

And now he was back. Ten years later he must have thought he could get away with the crass impudence, the insulting arrogance of coming back to the territory ruled by Anatoli Grishin.

He rose, went to a cabinet and burrowed for an old file. When he had it, he extracted another picture, a blow-up of a smaller one provided long ago by Aldrich Ames. After the end of the Monakh committee, a contact in the First Chief Directorate had given it to him as a souvenir. A mocking souvenir. But he had kept it like a treasure.

The face was younger than it would be now, but the gaze was still direct. The hair was blond and rumpled; there was no grey moustache and no smoked glasses. But it was the same face, the face of the young Jason Monk.

Grishin made two phone calls and left his listeners in no doubt that he would not tolerate delay. From the contact in the immigration department at the airport he wanted to know when this man arrived, from where, and whether he had left the country.

He ordered Borodin to return to the Metropol and discover when Dr Peters checked in, whether he had left, and if not what was his room.

He had the answers by mid-afternoon. Dr Peters had arrived on the scheduled British Airways flight from London seven days earlier, and if he had left the country it was not via Sheremetyevo. From Borodin he learned that Dr Peters had checked in with a prearranged booking from a reputable London travel agent the same day he arrived at the airport, had not left and was in room 841.

addressed him in the molasses-drawl of the American deep South.

'Mighty neighbourly, friend, yes, sir. I guess you'll be wondering what I was doing on your balcony . . .'

He was right there. The Swede had not the faintest idea.

'Well, I'll tell you. It was the darndest thing. I'm right next door to you here, and I just stepped out to smoke a seegar, not wanting to smoke in the room and all, and would you believe it, the goddamn door swung shut in the wind. So I figured I had no choice but to hop over the barrier to see if you'd be kind enough to let me through.'

It was a cold outside, the cigar-smoker was fully dressed with an attaché case in his hand, there was no wind and the balcony doors were not self-locking, but the businessman was beyond caring.

His unwelcome guest was still babbling his gratitude and apologies when he let himself out into the corridor and wished the Swede a mighty fine evening.

The businessman, who very fittingly marketed toilet fixtures, resecured the windows, drew the curtains, disrobed, hit the 'play' button and returned to his econo-budget pastime.

Monk walked unobserved down the corridor of the seventh floor, descended by the stairs and was met on the kerb by Magomed in the Volvo.

At midnight three men entered room 741 with a small suitcase, again using the pass-key. They worked for twenty minutes before leaving.

At four a.m. a device later shown to have contained three pounds of plastic explosive in a shaped charge detonated just below the ceiling of room 741. Forensic experts would deduce that it had been placed on top of a pyramid of furniture on the bed, and had gone off precisely beneath the centre of the bed in the replica of the room upstairs.

Room 841 was completely gutted. The mattress and duvet on the bed had been turned into a layer of fabric

down, most of it charred, which had settled on everything else. Beneath this were fragments of timber from the bed frame, wardrobe and cupboards, shards of glass from the mirrors and lamps, and numerous slivers of human bone.

Four emergency services attended. The ambulances came and soon went, for there was nothing for them save the hysterical occupants of three rooms along the corridor. However, the screaming occupants spoke no Russian and the ambulance men spoke nothing else. Seeing there were no physical injuries, they left the screamers to the night manager.

The fire service appeared, but though everything in both of the affected rooms was charred by the white heat of the explosion, nothing was actually blazing. The forensic team had plenty to do, bagging every last crumb of the debris, part of it human, for later analysis.

Homicide was represented, on the orders of a major-general, by Detective-Inspector Borodin. He could see at a glance there was nothing in the room bigger than the palm of a hand, and a dangerous four-foot-diameter hole in the floor, but there was something in the bathroom.

The door had evidently been closed, for it had been fragmented and the bits hurled into the washstand. The party wall had also come down, being forced into the bathroom by the blast from the other side.

But under the rubble was an attache case, scored, charred and deeply scratched. Its contents, however, had survived. Apparently at the moment of explosion the case must have been standing in the most sheltered place in either room, up against the inside bathroom wall, between the lavatory pan and the bidet. The water from the shattered appliances had soaked the briefcase, but its contents had survived. Borodin checked to see he was unobserved, then slipped both documents under his jacket.

Colonel Grishin had them in time for his coffee. Twenty-four hours can make a difference to a mood. He gazed at them both with deep satisfaction. One was a

in Russian, which he recognized as the Black Manifesto. The other was an American passport. It was in the name of Jason Monk.

'One to get in,' he thought, 'and one to get out. But this time, my friend, you are not getting out.'

Two other things happened that day and neither attracted a whit of attention. A British visitor whose passport gave his name as Brian Marks flew into Sheremetyevo airport on the scheduled afternoon flight from London, and two other Englishmen drove a Volvo saloon through the border from Finland.

So far as the officials at the airport were concerned the new arrival was one of hundreds and appeared to speak no Russian. But, like the others, he made his way through the various controls and finally emerged to hail a taxi and asked to be driven to central Moscow.

Dismissing his taxi on a street corner, he made sure he was not being followed, then continued by foot to the small second-class hotel where he had a reservation for a single room.

His currency declaration form showed he had admitted to a modest amount of British sterling pounds, which he would need to redeclare on departure or produce official exchange receipts in lieu, and some travellers' cheques to which the same stipulation would apply. His currency form made no mention of the bricks of hundred-dollar bills taped to the back of each thigh.

His surname was not really Marks, but the similarity with Marx, as in Karl Marx, had amused the engraver who had prepared his passport. Given the choice, he had elected to retain his real first name of Brian. He was in fact the same Russian-speaking ex-soldier with a career in special forces whom Sir Nigel Irvine had sent on the reconnaissance mission in September.

Having settled in, he set about his various tasks and purchases. He rented a small car from a Western agency and explored one of the outer suburbs of the city, the district of Vorontsovo in the far south of the capital.

For two days, at varying intervals so as not to attract attention to himself, he staked out and observed one particular building, a large blank-sided warehouse constantly visited during the daylight hours by heavy trucks.

By night he observed the building on foot, walking past a number of times, always clutching a half-empty bottle of vodka. On the few occasions another pedestrian came the opposite way, he would simply weave from side to side like any drunk, and be ignored.

What he saw he liked. The chain-link fence would prove no obstacle. The lorry-bay for deliveries and pickups was locked at night, but there was a small door with a padlock at the rear of the warehouse, and a single guard on foot made occasional tours of the outside during the hours of darkness. In other words, the building was a soft target.

At the old South Port second-hand car market, where everything, from a decrepit wreck to a nearly new limousine just stolen in the West, could be bought for cash, he acquired a set of Moscow number plates and a variety of tools including a pair of heavy-duty bolt-cutters.

In the centre of the city he purchased a dozen cheap but reliable Swatch watches and a variety of batteries, rolls of electrical wire and masking tape. When he was finally satisfied that he could find the warehouse with complete accuracy at any time of the day or night and get back to the city centre by a score of different routes, he returned to his hotel to wait for the Volvo pushing south from St Petersburg.

The rendezvous with Ciaran and Mitch was at the McDonald's hamburger bar on Tverskaya Street.

The other two special forces soldiers had had a slow but uneventful journey south.

In a garage in south London the Volvo had been endowed with its unusual cargo. Both front wheels had been removed and replaced with old-fashioned tyres containing inner tubes. Before this, each inner tube had been slit. Into the tubes were dropped hundreds of

'You're driver Fifty-two, Central City Cabs?' asked the man.

'Yes, but honestly, guys . . .'

A black-gloved finger pointed out a line on the worksheet.

'Two nights ago, a fare to Chisti Pereulok. Just before midnight. Who was it?'

'How should I know?'

'Don't get smart, pal, or I'll blow your balls off. Think.'

Vasili thought. Nothing came.

'A priest,' said the gunman.

That was it, the light was on.

'Right, I remember now. Chisti Pereulok, a small side-street. I had to check the street map. Had to wait there ten minutes before he was let in. Then he settled up and I left.'

'Describe.'

'Medium height, medium build. Late forties. A priest, come on, they all look the same. No, wait a minute, he had no beard.'

'A foreigner?'

'Don't think so. His Russian was perfect.'

'Seen him before?'

'Never.'

'Or since?'

'Nope. I offered to come back for him, but he said he didn't know how long he'd be. Look, if anything happened to him, it was nothing to do with me. I just drove him for ten minutes . . .'

'One last thing. Where from?'

'The Metropol, of course. That's what I do. Night shift at the rank outside the Metropol.'

'He came up the pavement or out the doors?'

'Out the doors.'

'How do you know?'

'I was head of the line. Standing by the car to be careful or you wait an hour then some the line takes your fare. So I was watching

Vaclav Havel at once acceded to a Western request to change the formula and add a particularly foul odour to make the stuff detectable in transit. The odour was similar to rotten fish, hence Mitch's reference to kippers.

By the mid-nineties the detection devices had become so sophisticated that they could even locate the non-smell variety. But warm rubber has its own similar odour, hence the use of the tyres as a transporting device. In fact, the Volvo had not been subjected to that sort of test, but Sir Nigel believed in extreme caution, a quality of which Ciaran and Mitch totally approved.

The raid on the factory took place six days after Colonel Grishin received the Black Manifesto and the passport of Jason Monk.

The trusty Volvo, with its new front wheels and equally new and false Moscow number plates, was driven by Brian. If anyone stopped them, he was the Russian-speaker.

They parked three streets away from their target and walked the rest. The chain-link fence at the rear of the premises proved no match for the bolt-cutters. The three men ran at the crouch across the intervening fifty feet of concrete and disappeared into the shadows cast by a pile of ink drums.

Fifteen minutes later the solitary night-guard made his round. He heard a loud burp from a patch of shadow, spun round and fixed his flashlight on the source. He saw a drunk, collapsed against the warehouse wall, clutching a bottle of vodka.

He had no time to work out how the man had got into the sealed compound for, having turned his back on the pile of drums, he never saw the figure in black overalls who emerged from between them and hit him hard on the back of the head with a piece of lead pipe. So far as the guard was concerned there was a brief flash of fireworks and then darkness.

Brian cinched the man's ankles, wrists and mouth with heavy tape while Ciaran and Mitch took the padlock off the door. When it was open they dragged the senseless

the fact of the matter, as being later
there was of course, Colonel Grishin was not
a violent person, plain with black eyes,
and he was, as a matter of fact, a very nice man, and
he was not at all violent. But his way
of talking was not very nice, and
he told them the purpose was to expose and
and he would find them.

Every week for the previous
month the Saturday edition of the Russian for
the world had carried the words and policies of the
new to five million homes across Russia. The idea
was to give a major newspaper carried and run
by the USSR had been his, as had also the monthly
Russian Review (Motherland).

These two vehicles, a mixture of easy competitions
in big prices, sex-confessions and race propaganda,
had carried the words of the Leader into every corner of
the land and contributed enormously to his electoral
popularity.

'When can you be back in production?' he asked the
printmaster. The man shrugged.

'When we have new presses,' he said. 'These cannot
be mended. Two months, perhaps.'

Kuznetsov was pale with shock. He had not yet told
the Leader himself. It was Grishin's fault, he assured
himself, the place should have been better guarded. But
one thing was certain; there would be no *Pravda* this
Saturday and no special edition of *Kodina* in a fortnight.
Nor for ten weeks at minimum. And the presidential
elections were in sight.

It was not a very good morning for Detective
Inspector Borodin either, though he had entered
office in the Homicide Division of the Militia HQ
Petrovka in good humour.

His geniality during the previous week had been
by his colleagues but had remained unexplained. In
the explanation was simple; his delivery of two val
documents to Colonel Anatoli Grishin after the
unexplained bomb explosion at the Metropol

brought him a very handsome bonus to his monthly retainer

Privately he knew there was not the slightest point in continuing inquiries into the outrage at the hotel. Restoration work had already begun, the insurers were almost certainly foreigners who would pick up the tab, the American guest was dead and the mystery was total. If he suspected that his own inquiries concerning the American, ordered by Grishin himself, had something to do with his almost immediate death he, Borodin, was not going to make an issue of it.

Igor Komarov was certainly going to be the new president of the Russian Federation in less than two months, the second most powerful man in the country would be Colonel Grishin, and there would be rewards to almost dizzying heights for those who had served him well during the years of opposition.

The office was abuzz with news of the destruction during the night of the printing presses of the LPPF Party. Borodin put it down to Zyuzenov's Communists or some paid hoodlums from one of the mafia gangs, motive obscure. He was just zipping his theories when his phone rang.

'Borodin?' said a voice.

'Detective Borodin speaking, yes.'

'Kuzmin, here.'

He curled his memory but it stayed blank. 'What?'

'Professor Kuzmin, forensic pathology lab, Second Medical Institute. Did you send me the specimens recovered from the Moscow bombing? The file had your name on it.'

'Ah, yes, I am the officer in charge of the case.'

'Well, you're a bloody fool.'

'I don't understand...'

'I have just finished my examination of the remains of the body recovered from the hotel room. Bloody mess, a lot of bits of wood and glass that have nothing to do with me,' said the irascible pathologist.

'So what's the problem, Professor? He asked me that'

The voice down the phone was becoming shrill with rage.

'Of course he's dead, poltroon. He wouldn't be in bits in my lab if he was running around.'

'Then I can't see the problem. I've been years in Homicide, and I've never seen anyone more dead.'

The voice from the Second Medical Institute took a grip on itself and dropped to the coaxing tone of one speaking to a small and rather dim child.

'The question, my dear Borodin is: *who* is dead?'

'Well, the American tourist, of course. You have his bones there.'

'Yes, I have bones, Detective Borodin.' The voice stressed the word 'detective' to imply the policeman would have trouble finding his way to the washroom without a guide-dog. 'I would also expect to have fragments of tissue, muscle, cartilage, sinew, skin, hair, nails, entrail . . . even a couple of grams of marrow. But what do I have? Bones, just bones, nothing but bones.'

'I don't follow you. What's wrong with the bones?'

The professor finally ran out of blue touch-paper and exploded. Borodin had to hold the phone away from his ear.

'There's nothing wrong with the bloody bones. They're lovely bones. They've been lovely bones for about twenty years, which is the period I estimate their former owner has been dead. What I am trying to get into your pin-sized brain is that someone took the trouble to blow to bits an anatomical skeleton, the sort every medical student keeps in the corner of his room.'

Borodin's mouth opened and shut like a fish.

'The American wasn't in that room?' he asked.

'Not when the bomb went off,' said Professor Kuzmin. 'Who was he anyway? Or, as he is presumably still alive, who is he?'

'I don't know. Just a Yankee academic.'

'Ah, you see, another intellectual. Like myself. Well, you can tell him I like his sense of humour. Where do you want me to send my report?'

The last thing Borodin wanted was for it to land on his own desk. He named a certain major-general on the militia praesidium.

The major-general received it the same afternoon. He rang Colonel Grishin to give him the news. He did not get a bonus.

By nightfall Anatoli Grishin had mobilized his private army of informants and it was a formidable force. Thousands of replicas of the photo of Jason Monk, the one taken from his own passport, were circulated to the Black Guards and the Young Combatants, who were spewed onto the streets of the capital in their hundreds to search for the wanted man. The effort and the numbers were greater than during the hunt for Leonid Zaitsev, the missing office cleaner.

Other copies went to the clan chiefs of the Dolgoruki underworld mafia with orders to locate and hold. Informants in the police and immigration services were alerted. A reward of one hundred billion roubles was offered for the fugitive, a sum to take the breath away.

Against such a locust-plague of eyes and ears there would be nowhere for the American to hide, Grishin advised Igor Komarov. This network of informants could penetrate every nook and corner of Moscow, every hideaway and bolt-hole, every cranny and crevice. If he did not lock himself inside his own embassy, where he could do no further harm, he would be found.

Grishin was almost right. There was one place his Russians could not penetrate: the tightly sealed world of the Chechens.

Jason Monk was inside that world, in a safe apartment above a spice shop, protected by Magomed, Aslan and Sharif and beyond them a screen of invisible street people who could see a Russian coming a mile away and communicate in a language no-one else could understand.

In any case, Monk had already made his second contact.

But young Kolya loved his father and never said a word. Later he learned the meaning of the gesture, but accepted the word of his teachers that it was all complete rubbish.

He was fifteen when the blitzkrieg erupted out of the west, on 22 June 1941. Within a month Smolensk fell to the German tanks and with thousands of others the boy was on the run. His parents did not make it and he never saw them again.

A strong, strapping youth, he carried his ten-year-old sister for a hundred miles until one night they jumped a train heading east. They did not know it, but it was a special train. Along with others it carried a disassembled tank factory out of the danger zone and east towards the safety of the Urals.

Cold and hungry, the children clung to the roof until the train came to rest at Chelyabinsk in the foothills of the mountains. There the engineers re-erected the factory called Tankograd.

There was no time for schooling. Galina went to an orphanage, Kolya was put to work in the factory. He stayed there for almost two years.

By the winter of 1942 the Soviets were taking horrendous losses in men and tanks around Kharkov and Stalingrad. The tactics were traditional and lethal. There was neither time nor talent for subtlety; the men and tanks were thrown into the muzzles of the German guns without thought or care for losses. In Russian military history that was how it had always been.

At Tankograd the demand was for more and more production; they worked sixteen-hour shifts and slept beneath the lathes. What they were building was the KV1, named after Marshal Kliment Voroshilov, a useless article as a soldier but one of Stalin's favourite toadies. The KV1 was a heavy tank, the Soviets' main battle tank at the time.

By the spring of 1943 the Soviets were reinforcing the bulge around the city of Kursk, an enclave 150 miles from north to south that jutted 100 miles into the

abreast over the crest of a ridge and down into a shallow valley; the Germans were on the opposite crest.

The young colonel was wrong about the Panzer IVs; they were Tigers. One by one they picked off the six KV1s with armour-piercing sabot.

Nikolai's tank was hit twice. The first shell tore off all the tracks on one side and peeled open the hull. Down in the driver's seat he felt the tank shudder and halt. The second shell took the turret a glancing blow and careened off into the hillside. But the impact was enough to kill the crew.

There were five men in the KV1 and four of them were dead. Nikolai, battered, bruised and shaken, tried to crawl out of his living tomb to the smell of running diesel fuel on hot metal. Bodies got in his way; he pushed them to one side.

The gun-commander and gunner were sprawled over the breech, blood and mucous running from mouth, nose and ears. Through the gap in the hull Nikolai could see the Tigers racing past, through the smoke of the other blazing KV1s.

To his surprise, he found the gun turret still worked. He hauled a shell up from the rack, pushed it into the breech and closed the mechanism. He had never done it before, but he had seen it done. Usually it took two men. Feeling sick from the blow to the head down below and the stench of the fuel up above, he turned the turret round, put his eye to the periscopic sight, found a Tiger barely 300 yards away and fired.

It turned out that the one he had picked was the last of the five. The four Tigers up ahead did not notice. He reloaded, found another target and fired again. The Tiger took his shell in the gap between turret and hull and exploded. Somewhere beneath Nikolai's feet there was a low 'whump' and flames began to trickle across the grass, spreading as they found more pools of fuel. After his second shell the remaining three Tigers noticed they were under attack from behind and turned. He took his third one side-on as it pulled round. The other two

with piggy eyes and the insignia of a political commissar. 'I think that's worth a bit of metal?'

The chunky commissar nodded. Comrade Stalin would approve. A box was brought from the tent. Rotmistrov pinned the order of Hero of the Soviet Union on the seventeen-year-old. The commissar, who happened to be Nikita Khrushchev, watched and nodded again.

Nikolai Nikolayev was told to report to a field hospital, where his scorched hands and face were treated with a smelly salve, and then return to the general's headquarters. There he was given a field commission, a lieutenantancy and a platoon of three KVs. Then it was back into combat.

That winter, with the Kursk salient miles behind him and the Panzers on the retreat, he received a captaincy and a company of brand new heavy tanks fresh from the factory. They were the IS-II, named after Josef (Iosef) Stalin. With a 122-mm gun and thicker armour, they became known as the Tiger-killer.

In Operation Bagration he got his second Hero of the Soviet Union medal for outstanding personal bravery and, on the outskirts of Berlin, fighting under Marshal Chuikov, the third.

This was the man, almost fifty-five years later, that Jason Monk had come to see.

If the old general had been a bit more tactful with the Politburo he would have got not only his marshal's baton but also a big retirement dacha out along the Moskva River at Peredelkino with the rest of the fat cats, all free as a gift of the State. But he always told them what he really thought, and they did not always like it.

So he built his own more modest bungalow for his declining years, off the Minsk road on the way to Tukhovo, an area studded with army camps where he could be close at least to what remained of his beloved army.

He had never married - 'no life for a young man' he would say of his numerous postings to the front

'Not quite. Papers, yes. From somewhere else.'

'Cold outside. Better sit down. Well, spit it out. What's your business?'

'Let me be perfectly frank. This uniform was to persuade you to receive me. I am not in the Russian Army, I am not a colonel and I am certainly not on anyone's general staff. In fact I am an American.'

Across the fireplace the Russian stared at him for several seconds as if he could not believe his ears. Then the points of his bristling moustache twitched in outrage.

'You're an impostor,' he snapped. 'You're a damned spy. I'm not having impostors and spies in my house. Get out.'

Monk remained where he was.

'All right, I will. But as 6,000 miles is a long way to come for thirty seconds, will you answer me one single question?'

General Nikolayev glowered at him. 'One question. What?'

'Five years ago when Boris Yeltsin asked you to come out of retirement and command the attack on Chechnya and the destruction of the capital Grozny, rumour has it you looked at the plans and told the then Defence Minister Pavel Grachev, "I command soldiers, not butchers. This is a job for slaughter-men." Is that true?'

'What of it?'

'Was it true? You allowed me a question.'

'All right, yes. And I was right.'

'Why did you say it?'

'That's two questions.'

'I've still got 6,000 more miles to get home.'

'All right. Because I don't believe genocide is a job for soldiers. Now get out.'

'You know that's a rotten book you're reading?'

'How do you know?'

'I've read it. It's twaddle.'

'True. So what?'

Monk slipped a hand into his briefcase and extracted

a century his junior, then grunted. 'Do Americans drink vodka?'

'They do on freezing nights in the middle of Russia.'

'There's a bottle over there. Help yourself.'

While the old man read, Monk treated himself to a slug of Moskovskaya and thought of the briefing he had had in Castle Forbes.

'He's probably the last of the Russian generals with an old-fashioned sense of honour. He's no fool and he's got no fear. There are ten million veterans who will still listen to Uncle Kolya,' the Russian tutor Oleg had told him.

After the fall of Berlin and a year in occupation, the young Major Nikolayev was sent back to Moscow, to Armoured Officer School. In the summer of 1950 he was appointed to command one of the seven regiments of heavy tanks on the Yalu River in the Far East.

The Korean War was at its height, with the Americans rolling back the North Koreans. Stalin was seriously thinking of saving the Koreans' bacon by throwing in his own new tanks against the Americans. Two things prevailed to prevent him: wiser counsels and his own paranoia. The IS-4s were so ultra-secret that details of them were never revealed, and Stalin feared to lose one intact. In 1951 Nikolayev returned to a lieutenant-colonelcy and a posting to Potsdam. He was still only twenty-five.

At thirty he commanded a special ops tank regiment in the Hungarian uprising. That was where he first upset Soviet Ambassador Yuri Andropov, who went on to become chairman of the KGB for fifteen years and General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR. Colonel Nikolayev refused to use his tanks' machine-guns to rake the crowds of protesting Hungarian civilians on the streets of Budapest.

'They're 70 per cent women and children,' he told the ambassador and architect of the crushing of the revolt.

'They're throwing rocks. Stones don't hurt tanks.'

'They must be taught a lesson,' shouted Andropov.

'Use your machine-guns.'

Staff, planning offensive operations against NATO. Then in 1979 up came Afghanistan. He was fifty-three, and was offered the command of the Fortieth Army, which would do the job. The post meant promotion from lieutenant-general to colonel-general.

General Nikolayev looked at the plans, looked at the terrain, looked at the indigenous people and wrote a report that said the operation and occupation would prove a man-killer, had no point and would constitute a Soviet Vietnam. It was the second time he upset Andropov.

They gave him the wilderness again – recruit training. The generals who went to Afghanistan got their medals and their glory – for a while. They also got their body-bags, tens of thousands of them.

'This is garbage. I won't believe this rubbish.'

The old general tossed the black file across the hearth to land in Monk's lap. 'You have a nerve, Yankee. You came barging into my country, into my house . . . try to fill my head with these pernicious lies . . .'

'Tell me, General, what do you think of us?'

'Us?'

'Yes, us. The Americans, the people from the West. I have been sent here. I am no freelance. Why have I been sent? If Komarov is a fine man a a great leader-to-be, why should we give a fuck?'

The old man stared at him, not so much shocked by the language, which he had heard many times before, but by the intensity of the younger man opposite.

'I know I've spent my whole life fighting you.'

'No, General, you've spent your whole life opposing us. And you did so in the service of regimes you know have done terrible things . . .'

'This is my country, American. Insult it at your peril.'

Monk leaned forward and tapped the Black Manifesto. 'But nothing like this. Not Khrushchev, not Brezhnev, not Andropov, nothing like this . . .'

'If it's true, if it's true,' shouted the old soldier. 'Anybody could write that.'

things that made him a legend. He had banned 'hazing', the systematic bullying of new recruits by three-year men that led to hundreds of suicides, in every unit under his command, and the other generals copied. He had fought the political establishment tooth and claw for better conditions and food for his men, and he had insisted on unit-pride and intensive training, over and over again, until every unit he commanded from platoon to division was the best in the line when it counted. Gorbachev gave him his General of the Army rank and then fell from power.

'What do you expect, American?'

General Nikolayev threw down the Verification report and stared at the fire.

'If it's all true, then the man's a shit after all. And what am I supposed to do about it? I'm old, retired these eleven years, past it, over the hill . . .'

'They are still out there,' said Monk as he stood up and put the files back in his case. 'Millions of them. Veterans. Some served under you, others remember you, most have heard of you. They will still listen if you speak.'

'Look, Mr American, this land of mine has suffered more than you can ever understand. This motherland of mine is soaked in the blood of her sons and daughters. Now you tell me there is more to come. I grieve, if it is true, but I can do nothing.'

'And the army? Which will be made to do these things. What of the army, your army?'

'It is not my army any more.'

'It's as much your army as anyone else's.'

'It's a defeated army.'

'No, not defeated. The Communist regime was defeated. Not the soldiers, not your soldiers. They were withdrawn. Now here is a man who wants to rebuild them. But for a new purpose. Aggression, invasion, enslavement, slaughter.'

'Why should I?'

'Do you have a car, General?'

gaggle of offspring, some legitimate and many not, disputes as to who was the legitimate heir flared up. Wars broke out over rival claims. The heralds, as keepers of the archive, were the final arbiters of true bloodline and of who had the right 'to bear arms', meaning not weapons but a coat of arms describing in pictorial terms the ancestry.

Even today, the College will adjudicate on rival claims, devise a coat of arms for a newly ennobled banker or industrialist, or for a fee trace the genealogical tree of anyone as far back as records go.

Not unnaturally, the heralds are academics, steeped in their strange science with its arcane Norman-French language and emblems, mastery of which requires many years of study.

Some specialize in the ancestry of the noble houses of Europe, linked to the British aristocracy by constant intermarriage. By discreet but sedulous enquiry, Sir Nigel Irvine discovered that one in particular was the world's leading expert on the Romanov dynasty of Russia. It was said of Dr Lancelot Probyn that he had forgotten more about the Romanovs than the Romanovs ever knew. After introducing himself over the phone as a retired diplomat preparing a paper for the Foreign Office on possible monarchic trends in Russia, Sir Nigel asked him for tea at the Ritz.

Dr Probyn turned out to be a small cuddly man who treated his subject with great good humour and no pomposity. He reminded the old spymaster of illustrations of Dickens's Mr Pickwick.

'I wonder,' said Sir Nigel as the crustless cucumber sandwiches arrived with the Earl Grey tea, 'if we might contemplate the matter of the Romanov succession?'

The post of Clarenceux King of Arms, to give Dr Probyn his glorious title, is not vastly paid and the chubby doctor was unaccustomed to tea at the Ritz. He tucked into the sandwiches with eager industry.

'The Romanov line is only my hobby, you know. Not my real job.'

'Well, theoretically anything is feasible. Any monarchy can choose to become a republic by expelling its king. Or queen. Greece did. And any republic can choose to institute a constitutional monarchy. Spain did. Both in the last thirty years. So, yes, it could be done.'

'Then the problem would be the candidate?'

'Absolutely. General Franco chose to create the legislation to restore the Spanish monarchy after his death. He chose the grandson of Alfonso XIII, Prince Juan Carlos, who reigns to this day. But there no counter-claim emerged. The bloodline was clear. Counter-claims can be messy.'

'There are counter-claims in the Romanov line?'

'All over the place. Extremely messy.'

'Anyone stand out?'

'No-one springs to mind. I'd have to look hard. It's been a long time since anyone seriously asked.'

'Would you have another look?' asked Sir Nigel. 'I have to travel. Say, when I return? I'll call you at your office.'

Back in the days when the KGB was one vast organization for espionage, suppression and control, with a single chairman, its tasks were so varied that it had to be subdivided into chief directorates, directorates and departments.

Among these were the Eighth Chief Directorate and the Sixteenth Directorate, both charged with electronic surveillance, radio-interception, phone-tapping and spy satellites.

As such, they were the Soviet equivalent of the American National Security Agency and National Reconnaissance Organization or the British Government Communications Headquarters, GCHQ.

For the old-stagers of the KGB such as Chairman Andropov, electronic intelligence-gathering, or *ELINT*, was hi-tech and scarcely understood, but at least the importance of it was recognized. In a society where

information superhighway, the Internet, is all about.'

'The traffic must be vast.'

'It is. But so are our computers. It's a question of filtering out. Ninety per cent of computer-generated traffic is chitchat, idiots talking to each other. Nine per cent is commercial – companies discussing product, prices, progress, contracts, delivery dates. One per cent is governmental. That one per cent used to be half the traffic flying around up there.'

'How much is coded?'

'All governmental and about half the commercial. But most of the commercial codes we can break.'

'Where in all that would my American friend be transmitting?'

The FAPSI officer, who had spent his working life in the covert world, knew better than to ask for more details.

'Probably among the commercial traffic,' he said. 'The governmental stuff, we know the source. We may not be able to crack it, but we know it comes from this or that embassy, legation, consulate. Is your man in one of those?'

'No.'

'Then he's probably using the commercial satellites. The American government machines are mainly used for watching us and listening to us. They also carry diplomatic traffic. But now there are scores of commercial satellites up there; companies rent time and communicate with all their branch offices round the world.'

'I think my man is transmitting from Moscow. Probably receiving, too.'

'Receiving doesn't help us. A message pumped out by a satellite over us could be received anywhere from Archangel down to the Crimea. It's when he transmits we might spot him.'

'So, if a Russian commercial company were to engage you to find the sender, you could do it?'

'Maybe. The fee would be substantial, depending on

Sir Nigel Irvine flew into Moscow two days after his talk at the Ritz with Dr Probyn. He was accompanied by a personal interpreter, for although he had once had a working knowledge of Russian, it was far too rusty to be reliable for delicate discussions.

The man he brought back was the ex-soldier and Russian-speaker, Brian Marks, except that Marks was now on his real passport in the name of Brian Vincent. At immigration the passport control officer punched both names into his computer but neither came up as a recent or frequent visitor.

'You are together?' he asked. One man was clearly the senior, slim, white-haired and, according to his passport, in his mid-seventies; the other was late thirties, dark-suited and looked fit.

'I am the gentleman's interpreter,' said Vincent.

'My Russky not good,' said Sir Nigel helpfully, in bad Russian.

The Immigration officer was less than interested. Foreign businessmen often needed interpreters. Some could be hired from agencies in Moscow; some tycoons brought their own. It was normal. He waved them through.

They checked into the National, where the unfortunate Jefferson had stayed. Waiting for Sir Nigel, deposited twenty-four hours earlier by an olive-skinned man no-one recalled but who happened to be a Chechen, was a single envelope. It was handed to him with his room key.

It contained a slip of blank paper. Had it been intercepted or lost, no particular harm would have come. The writing was not on the paper, but on the inside of the envelope in lemon juice.

With the envelope sliced open and laid flat, Brian Vincent gently warmed it with a match from the complimentary box on the bedside table. In pale brown, seven figures became discernible, a ~~private phone~~ number. When he had memorized it, Sir Nigel ~~nodded~~

He greeted his visitors and bade them be seated.

'Permit me first to apologize that my poor grasp of Russian is so unsatisfactory that I have to converse through an interpreter,' said Sir Nigel.

Vincent translated rapidly. The Patriarch nodded and smiled.

'And, alas, I speak no English,' he replied. 'Ah, Father Maxim, please place the coffee on a table. We will serve ourselves. You may go.'

Sir Nigel began by introducing himself, though avoiding mention that he had once been a very senior intelligence officer combating Russia and all her works. He confined himself to saying that he was a veteran of Britain's 'Foreign Service' (almost right), now in retirement but recalled for the present task of negotiation.

Without mentioning the Council of Lincoln, he related that the Black Manifesto had been privately shown to men and women of enormous influence, all of whom had been deeply shocked by it.

'As shocked no doubt as yourself, Holiness.'

Alexei nodded sombrely as the Russian translation ended.

'I have come, therefore, to suggest to you that the present situation involves us all, people of good will inside and outside Russia. We had a poet in England who said: no man is an island. We are all part of the whole. For Russia, one of the greatest countries in the world, to fall under the hand of a cruel dictator again would be a tragedy for us in the West, for the people of Russia, and most of all for the Holy Church.'

'I do not doubt you,' said the Patriarch, 'but the Church cannot involve itself in politics.'

'Overtly, no. Yet the Church must struggle against evil. The Church is always involved in morality, is it not?'

'Of course.'

'And the Church has the right to seek to protect itself from destruction, and from those who would seek to destroy her and her mission on earth?'

'Beyond doubt.'

be preaching for a new stability, an icon above politics. Komarov could not accuse you of meddling in politics, of being against him, even though he might privately suspect what is afoot. And there are other factors . . .'

Skilfully Nigel Irvine trailed the temptations before the Patriarch. The union of Church and Throne, the full restoration of the Orthodox Church in all its panoply, the return of the Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias to his palace within the Kremlin walls, the resumption of credits from the West as stability returned.

'What you say has much logic, and it appeals to my heart,' said Alexei II when he had thought it over. 'But I have seen the Black Manifesto. I know the worst. My brothers in Christ, the convocation of bishops, have not seen it and would not believe it. Publish it, and half of Russia might even agree with it . . . No, Sir Nigel, I do not overestimate my flock.'

'But if another voice were to speak? Not yours, Holiness, not officially, but a strong and persuasive voice, with your silent backing?'

He meant the maverick Father Gregor Rusakov, to whom the Patriarch had, with considerable moral courage, given his personal authority to preach.

Father Rusakov had been turned down in his youth by seminary after seminary. He was far too intelligent for the KGB's taste and far too passionate. So he had withdrawn to a small monastery in Siberia and taken holy orders before becoming a wandering priest, with no parish, preaching where he could before moving on ahead of the secret police.

They caught him, of course, and he got five years in a labour camp for anti-State utterances. In court he had refused the State's paid-off defence counsel, defending himself with such brilliance that he forced the judges to admit they were raping the Soviet constitution.

Liberation under Gorbachev's amnesty for priests showed he had lost none of his fire. He resumed preaching but also castigated the bishops for their



he left, he forgot this on the table.'

He held up a lighter. It was gold and expensive, a Cartier. The concierge was puzzled.

'Yes, sir?'

'Anyway, I ran after him, but I was too late. He was driving away . . . a long black Mercedes. But the commissionaire thought it might be one of yours. I managed to grab the number.'

He passed over the slip of paper.

'Ah, yes, sir. One of ours. Excuse me.'

The concierge checked his log for the previous evening.

'That must have been Mr Trubshaw. Shall I take the lighter?'

'No problem. I'll just hand it in to reception and they can put it in his keyhole.'

With a cheery wave, Kuznetsov strolled over to the reception desk. He pocketed the lighter.

'Hi, there. Could you give me Mr Trubshaw's room number?'

The Russian girl was dark and pretty and occasionally moonlighted with Americans. She flashed a smile.

'One moment, sir.'

'She punched the name into her desk-top and shook her head:

'I'm sorry. Mr Trubshaw and his companion left this morning.'

'Oh, damn. I hoped to catch him. Do you know if he has left Moscow?'

She punched in more figures.

'Yes, sir, we confirmed his flight this morning. He returned to London on the midday plane.'

Kuznetsov was not aware of the reason why Colonel Grishin wanted to trace the mysterious Mr Trubshaw but he reported back what he had found. When he had gone, Grishin used his contact in the Visa Applications section of the Immigration division of the Interior Ministry. The details were faxed to him and the photo that had accompanied the application through the

'Have you ever seen him before?' he asked.

To his horror the old spymaster threw back his head and roared with laughter.

'See him? Not personally, no. But that face is stamped on the mind of everyone my age who ever worked at Yazenevo. Don't you know who he is?'

'No. Or I wouldn't be here.'

'Well, we called him the Fox. Nigel Irvine. Ran operations against us for years through the sixties and seventies, then became chief of the British Secret Intelligence Service for six years.'

'A spy.'

'A master of spies, a runner of spies,' Drordec corrected him. 'Not the same thing. And he was one of the best ever. Why are you interested?'

'He came to Moscow yesterday.'

'Good God, do you know why?'

General enquired as to his health. Bolt upright in a leather-backed chair in a room at the Officers' Club of the Frunze and told the reporter his health was fine. 'Health are my own,' he barked, 'I don't need eyes and I can still outmarch any whipper-snapper.'

The reporter, who was in his early forties, believed the photographer, a woman in her mid-twenties, at him with awe. She had heard her grandfather of following the young tank commander into Berlin four years before.

The conversation drifted to the state of the country. 'Deplorable,' snapped Uncle Kolya. 'A bloody mess.' 'I suppose,' suggested the reporter, 'you will be voting for the UPF and Igor Komarov in the January election?' 'Him, never,' snapped the general. 'A bunch of fascists, that's all they are. Wouldn't touch them with a sterilized bargepole.'

'I don't understand,' quavered the journalist, 'I would have thought . . .'

'Young man, don't think for one minute that I have fallen for that phoney patriotism crap Komarov keeps churning out. I've seen patriotism, boy. Seen men bleed for it, seen good men die for it. Get to recognize the real thing, don't you see? This man Komarov is no patriot, it's all bullshit and catcrap.'

'I see,' said the reporter, who did not see at all and was completely bewildered; 'but surely there are people who feel his plans for Russia . . .'

'His plans for Russia are bloodshed,' snarled Kolya. 'Think we haven't had enough bloodshed in land already? I've had to wade through the damn and I don't want to see any more. The man's a Look, boy, I've fought fascists all my life. Fought Kursk, fought 'em at Bagration, across the Vistula to the bloody bunker.'

'German or Russian, a fascist's a fascist, and all . . .' He could have used any of forty words

Russian refer to private parts. But as there was a woman present he settled for *merzav* — villains.

'But surely,' protested the journalist. 'Russia needs to be cleaned up of all the filth?'

'Oh, there's filth all right. But a lot of it is not ethnic-minority filth, it's home-grown Russian crap. What about the bent politicians, the corrupt bureaucrats hand-in-hand with the gangsters?'

'But Komarov is going to sort out the gangsters.'

'Igor bloody Komarov is financed by the gangsters, can't you see that? Where do you think the tidal wave of his money is coming from? The tooth-fairy? With him in charge this country is bought and paid for by the gangsters. I tell you, boy, no man who ever wore the uniform of his country and wore it with pride should ever put those black-uniformed thugs of his guard in charge of the motherland.'

'Then what should we do?'

The old general reached for a copy of the day's paper and gestured at the back page.

'Did you see that priest fella on the box last night?'

'Father Gregor, the preacher? No, why?'

'I think he may have got it right. And we may have got it wrong all these years. Bring back God and the tsar.'

The interview caused a sensation, but not for what it said. It was the source that caused the furor. Russia's most famous old soldier had delivered a denunciation that would be read by every officer and trooper in the land, and a large part of the twenty million veterans.

The interview was syndicated in its entirety in the weekly *Our Army*, successor to the *Red Star*, which went into every barracks in Russia. Extracts were included in the TV national news and repeated on the radio. After that the general declined to give any more interviews.

In the house off Kiselny Boulevard Kuznetsov was almost in tears as he confronted a stony-faced Igor Komarov.

'I don't understand, Mr President. I just don't understand. If there was one figure in the entire country who

I would have assumed to be a staunch supporter of the UPF and of yourself, it would have been General Nikolayev.'

Igor Komarov, and Anatoli Grishin, who was standing staring out of the window onto the snowy forecourt, heard him out in bleak silence. Then the young propaganda chief returned to his office to continue ringing round the media to try to limit the damage.

It was not an easy task. He could hardly denounce Uncle Kolya as a geriatric who had lost his wits, for this was clearly not true. His only plea was that the general had got it all wrong. But the questions about where the UPF's funding was coming from were getting harder and harder to handle.

A fuller restoration of the UPF position would have been made easier by devoting the whole next issue of *Awake!* to the topic, along with the monthly edition of *Motherland*. Unfortunately they had been silenced and the new presses were only now leaving Baltimore.

Back in the UPF president's office the silence was finally broken by Komarov.

'He saw the Black Manifesto, didn't he?'

'I believe so,' said Grishin.

'First the presses, then the secret meetings with the Patriarch, now this. What the hell is going on?'

'We're being sabotaged, Mr President.'

Igor Komarov's voice remained deceptively quiet, too quiet. But his face was deathly pale and bright spots burned redly on each cheek. Like the late secretary Akopov, Anatoli Grishin, too, had seen the rages of which the fascist leader was capable, and even he feared them. When Komarov spoke again, his voice had dropped to a whisper.

'You are retained, Anatoli, at my side, the closest man to me, the man destined to have more power in Russia than any save me, to prevent me being sabotaged. Who is doing this?'

'An Englishman called Irvine and an American called Monk.'

'Two of them? Is that all?'

'They obviously have backing, Mr President, and they have the manifesto. They are showing it around.'

Komarov rose from behind his desk, took up a heavy cylindrical ebony ruler and began to tap it into the palm of his left hand. As he spoke his voice began to rise in tone.

'Then find them and suppress them, Anatoli. Find out what the next stage is, and prevent it. Now listen to me carefully. On 15 January in just over six weeks, 110 million Russian voters will have the right to cast their ballot for the next President of Russia. I intend that they shall vote for me.

'On a 70 per cent poll, that means 77 million votes cast. I want 40 million. I want a first-round win, not a run-off. A week ago I could have counted on 60 million. That fool of a general has just cost me ten.'

The word 'ten' came out close to a scream of anger. The ruler was rising and falling, but Komarov was now hammering the desk-top with it. Without warning he began to shriek his rage at his persecutors, using the ruler to hit his own telephone until the Bakelite cracked and shattered. Grishin stood rigid; down the corridor there was utter silence as office staff froze where they were.

'Now some demented priest has started a new hare run, calling for the return of the tsar. There will be no tsar in this land other than me, and when I rule they will learn the meaning of discipline such that Ivan the Terrible's choirboys seem like a choirboy.'

As he spoke, he was bringing the ebony ruler down again and again on the smashed wreckage of the telephone, starting the bits as if the once-useful tool was itself the obedient Russian people learning the meaning of discipline under the knout.

The last scream of 'choirboy' died away and Komarov dropped the ruler back on his desk. He took several deep inhalations and resumed his grip on himself. His voice returned to normal levels, but his hands were shaking.

with passion so he placed all ten fingertips on the desk to steady them.

'Tonight I will address a rally at Vladimir, the greatest of the whole campaign. It will be broadcast, nationwide tomorrow. After that I shall address the nation every night until the election. The funds have been arranged. That is my business. The publicity belongs to Kuznetsov.'

From behind his desk he reached out an arm and pointed his forefinger straight at Grishin's face.

'Your business, Anatoli Grishin, is one and one only. Stop the sabotage.'

The last sentence was also a shout. Komarov slumped into his chair and waved his hand in dismissal. Grishin, without a word, silently crossed the carpet to the door and let himself out.

In the days of Communism there was only one bank, the Narodny or People's Bank. After the fall, and with the onset of capitalism, banks sprang up like mushrooms, until there were over 8,000 of them.

Many were blink-and-you-miss-it affairs which quickly folded, taking their depositors' money with them. Others vaporized in the night, with the same effect. The survivors learned their banking almost as they went along, for experience in a Communist state was sparse.

Nor was banking a safe occupation. In ten years over 400 bankers had been assassinated, usually for failing to see eye-to-eye with gangsters on the matter of unsecured loans or other forms of illegal co-operation.

By the late nineties the business had settled down to a basic 400 reasonably reputable banks and with the top fifty of these the West was prepared to do business.

Banking was centred in St Petersburg and Moscow, mainly in the latter. In an ironic mirror of organized crime, banking had also amalgamated, with the so-called Top Ten doing 80 per cent of the business. In some

cases, the level of investment was so high that the enterprise could be undertaken only by consortia of two or three banks acting together.

Chief among the major banks in the winter of 1999 were the Most Bank, the Smolensky and, biggest of all, the Moskovsky Federal Bank.

It was to the head office of the Moskovsky that Jason Monk addressed himself in the first week of December. The security was like Fort Knox.

Because of the dangers to life and limb the chairmen of the major banks had private protection squads that would make the personal security of any American president look puny. Three at least had long removed their families to London, Paris and Vienna, respectively, and commuted to their Moscow offices in private jets. When inside Russia their personal protectors ran into hundreds. It took thousands more to protect the bank's branches.

To achieve a personal interview with the chairman of the Moskovsky Federal without an appointment made days earlier, at the very least, was unheard-of. But Monk managed it. He brought with him something equally unheard-of.

After a body search and an inspection of his briefcase on the ground floor of the tower block, he was allowed to go up under escort to Executive Reception, three floors below the chairman's personal suite.

There the letter he offered was examined by a smooth young Russian who spoke perfect English. He asked Monk to wait and disappeared through a stout timber door that opened only to a code in a keypad. Two armed guards watched Monk as the minutes dragged by. To the surprise of the female receptionist behind the desk, the personal aide returned and asked Monk to follow him. Beyond the door he was frisked again and an electronic scanner was run over him as the smooth Russian apologized.

'I understand,' said Monk, 'times are hard.'

Two floors further up he was shown into another

but they all need banks.'

'Insults are one thing, Mr Bernstein. What I carry in this case promises more than insults.'

Bernstein stared at him long and hard. 'This manifesto, you brought it with you?'

'Yes.'

'If Komarov and his thugs knew you were here, what would he do?'

'Have me killed. His men are all over the city looking for me now.'

'You've got a nerve.'

'I agreed to do a job. After I'd read the manifesto, it seemed worth doing.'

Bernstein held out his hand. 'Show me.'

Monk gave him the Verification report first. The banker was accustomed to reading complex documents at great speed. He finished it in ten minutes.

'Three men, eh?'

'The old cleaner, the secretary Akopov, who foolishly left it out on his desk to be stolen, and Jefferson, the journalist who Komarov wrongly thought had read it.'

Bernstein punched a button on his intercom.

'Ludmila, get into the cuttings agency files for late July, early August. See if the local papers carried anything on Akopov, a Russian, and an English reporter called Jefferson. On the first name, try the obituaries as well.'

He stared at his desktop screen as the microfiches were flashed up. Then he grunted.

'They're dead all right. And now you, Mr Monk, if they catch you.'

'I'm rather hoping they won't.'

'Well, since you've taken the risk, I'll look at Komarov's private intentions for us all.'

He held out his hand again. Monk gave him the slim black file. Bernstein began to read. One page he read several times, flicking back and forward as he reread the text. Without looking up, he said, 'Ilya, leave us. It's all right, lad, go.'

Leonid Bernstein spun round from the windows. 'You may leave now, Mr Monk.'

Monk retrieved his two files from the desk and slipped them into the slim leather case in which he had brought them.

He knew he had gone too far. Babi Yar is a ravine outside Kiev. Between 1941 and 1943 100,000 civilians were machine-gunned on the edge of the ravine so that their corpses fell inside. Some were commissars and Communist officials, but 95 per cent were the Jews of Ukraine. Monk had reached the door when Leonid Bernstein spoke again.

'Have you been there, Mr Monk?'

'No, sir.'

'And what have you heard of it?'

'I have heard that it is a bleak place.'

'I have been to Babi Yar. It is a terrible place. Good-day to you, Mr Monk.'

Dr Lancelot Probyn's office in the headquarters of the College of Arms in Queen Victoria Street was small and cluttered. Every horizontal space was occupied by bundles of paper which seemed to be in no particular order yet which presumably made some sense to the genealogist.

When Sir Nigel Irvine was shown in, Dr Probyn leapt to his feet, swept the entire House of Grimaldi onto the floor and bade his visitor take the chair thus liberated.

'So, how goes the succession?' asked Irvine.

'To the throne of the Romanovs? Not well. As I thought. There's one who might have a claim but doesn't want it, one who lusts after it but is excluded on two counts and an American who hasn't been approached and hasn't a chance anyway.'

'Bad as that, eh?' said Irvine. Dr Probyn bounced and twinkled. He was in his element, his own world of blood-lines, intermarriages and strange rules.

'Let's start with the fraudsters,' he said. 'You remember Anna Anderson? She was the one who all her

'It's precedented, choosing a foreigner?'

'Oh, massively. It's been done time and again. Look, we English have done it three times. When Elizabeth I died single, if not a virgin, we invited James VI of Scotland down to become James I of England. Three kings later, we threw out James II and invited the Dutchman William of Orange to take the throne. When Queen Anne died without surviving issue, we asked George of Hanover to come across as George I. And he hardly spoke a word of English.'

'The Europeans have done the same?'

'Of course. The Greeks twice. In 1833, after winning their freedom from the Turks, they invited Otto of Bavaria to become King of Greece. He wasn't up to much, so they deposed him in 1862 and asked Prince William of Denmark to take over. He became George I. Then they proclaimed a republic in 1924, restored the monarchy in 1935 and abolished it again in 1973. Can't make their minds up.

'The Swedes a couple of hundred years ago were at a loss, so they looked round and invited the Napoleonic General Bernadotte to become their king. Worked pretty well; his descendants are still there.

'And, finally, in 1905 Prince Charles of Denmark was asked to become Haakon VII of Norway, and his descendants are still there, too. If you've got an empty throne, and you want a monarch, it's not always a bad thing to pick a good outsider rather than a useless local boy.'

Sir Nigel was silent again, lost in thought. Dr. Fredeby now had suspected his enquires were not entirely academic.

'May I ask something?' said the herald.

'Certainly.'

'If the question of restoration ever did occur in Russia, what would be the American reaction? I mean, they control the purse-strings, the only superpower at

'The Americans are traditionally ~~anti-monarchy~~ admitted Irvine, 'but they're no fool's ~~either~~ in 1913

America was instrumental in exiling the German Kaiser. That led to the chaotic vacuum of the Weimar Republic, and into that vacuum stepped Adolf Hitler with results we all know. In 1945 Uncle Sam specifically did not terminate the Japanese imperial house. The result? For fifty years Japan has been the most stable democracy in Asia, anti-Communist and a friend of America. I think Washington would take the view that if the Russians decided to go that road, it's their choice.'

'But it would have to be the entire Russian people, by plebiscite?'

Sir Nigel nodded. 'Yes, I think it would. The Duma alone wouldn't suffice. Too many allegations of corruption. It would have to be the nation's decision.'

'Then whom have you in mind?'

'That's the problem, Dr Probyn. No-one. From what you've told me, a playboy or an itinerant pretender won't work. Look, let's think what qualities a restored tsar would need to have. Do you mind?'

The Herald's eyes sparkled. 'Much more fun than my usual job. What about age?'

'Forty to sixty, wouldn't you say? No job for a teenager, nor a geriatric. Mature but not elderly. What next?'

'Have to be born a prince of a reigning house, look and behave the part,' said Probyn

'A European house?'

'Oh, surely yes. I don't suppose the Russians want an African, Arab or Asian.'

'No. Caucasian then, Doctor.'

'He'd need a living legitimate son and they'd both have to convert to the Orthodox Church.'

'That's not insuperable.'

'But there is a real stinker,' said Probyn. 'His mother would have to have been a member of the Orthodox Church at the time of his birth.'

'OK. Anything else?'

'Royal blood on both sides of his parentage, preferably Russian on one side at least . . .'

'And a senior or former army officer. The support of the Russian officer corps would be vital. I don't know what they'd think of a chartered accountant.'

'You've forgotten one thing,' said Probyn. 'He'd have to speak fluent Russian. George I arrived speaking only German, and Bernadotte spoke only French. But those days are gone. Nowadays a monarch must address his people. The Russians wouldn't take kindly to a stream of Italian.'

Sir Nigel Irvine rose and took a slip of paper from his breast pocket. It was a cheque, and a generous one.

'I say, that's awfully decent,' said the herald.

'I'm sure the College has its overheads, my dear doctor. Look, would you do me a favour?'

'If I can.'

'Cast your eye about. Run through the reigning houses of Europe. See if there is any man who fits all those categories.'

Five miles to the north of the Kremlin in the suburb of Kashenkin Lug lies the complex of the television centres from which are transmitted all the TV programmes beamed across Russia.

Either side of the Boulevard Akademika Koroleva are the TV Centre (Domestic) and the International TV Centre. Three hundred yards away the needle spire of the Ostankino TV tower juts into the sky, the highest point in the capital.

State TV, very much under the control of the incumbent government, is broadcast from here, as are the two independent or commercial TV stations which carry advertising to pay their way. The buildings are shared, but on different levels.

Boris Kuznetsov was deposited by one of the UPF's chauffeur-driven Mercedes. He carried with him the video film of the hugely impressive rally at Vladimir that Igor Komarov had conducted the previous day.

Cut and edited by the young genius of a director, Litvinov, it had emerged as a triumph. To a wildly

channels. In all other countries across Western and Eastern Europe, the incumbent governments used their national television services to support the regime of the moment, and had done for years.

In Russia the State TV network carried copious coverage of the campaign of Acting President Ivan Markov, while giving occasional mentions, only within a dry news context, to even the existence of the other two candidates.

Those other two candidates, the smaller fry having dropped out along the way, were Gennady Zyuganov for the neo-Communist Socialist Union and Igor Komarov of the Union of Patriotic Forces.

The former was clearly having problems raising campaign cash; the latter appeared to enjoy a cornucopia of it. With these funds, Komarov had been able literally to buy publicity in the American manner by taking hours of paid TV time on the two commercial channels.

By buying the TV time, he could ensure he was not cut, edited or censured. Gurov had long been happy to oblige with prime-time slots for the full-length screenings of Komarov's speeches and rallies. For he was no fool and realized that if Komarov won there would be some heavy firings among the State TV staff. A lot of the bigwigs would go, Komarov would see to that. For those with their hearts in the right place, there would be transfers and promotions.

Kuznetsov stared at him in puzzlement. Something was wrong.

'The fact is, Boris, there's been a sort of policy shift. At board level. Nothing to do with me, you understand. I'm just the errand boy. This is way up above my head, in the stratosphere.'

'What policy shift, Anton? What are you talking about?'

Gurov shifted uncomfortably and cursed again the managing director who had saddled him with the task.

'You probably know, Boris, like all big enterprises, we are heavily into the banks. When push comes to shove,

'What priest fellow?'

'You know, the revivalist preacher. Always urging people to turn to God.'

'God and the tsar,' muttered Kuznetsov.

'That's him.'

'Father Gregor.'

'The same. I can't understand it myself but . . .'

'You're crazy. He hasn't two roubles to rub together.'

'That's just the point. The money seems to be in place. So we're carrying him on the news and the special events slot. He's got a hell of a schedule. Want to see it?'

'No, I do not want to see his bloody schedule.'

With that, Kuznetsov stormed out. How he was going to face his idol with the news, he had no idea. But a suspicion that had been in his head for three weeks had concretized into total belief. There had been looks between Komarov and Grishin when he broke the news of the printing presses and then of the general. They knew something that he did not. But one thing he did know; something was going catastrophically wrong.

That night on the other side of Europe Sir Nigel Irvine was interrupted at his dinner. The club servant held out the phone to him.

'A Dr Probyn, Sir Nigel.'

The herald's chirpy voice came down the line from his office where he was clearly working late.

'I think I've got your man.'

'Your office, tomorrow, ten o'clock? Splendid.'

Sir Nigel handed the phone back to the hovering steward.

'I think this calls for a port, Trubshaw. Club vintage, if you please.'

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

tion,)

In Russia the militia or police force comes under the direction of the Ministry of the Interior, the MVD.

Like most police forces, it has two main strands: the federal police on the one hand and the local or regional police on the other.

The regions are called oblasts. Largest of them is the Moscow Oblast, a chunk of territory encompassing the entire capital of the Federal Republic and the surrounding countryside. It is like the District of Columbia but with a third of Virginia and Maryland thrown in.

Moscow, therefore, plays host, though in different buildings, to both the Federal Militia and the Moscow Militia. Unlike Western police establishments, the Russian Interior Ministry also has at its disposal a private army - 130,000 heavily armed MVD troops, almost a match for the real army under the Defence Ministry.

Shortly after the fall of Communism the mushroom-rise of organized crime became so open, so pervasive and so scandalous that Boris Yeltsin was forced to order the formation of entire divisions within the Federal and Moscow Oblast police to fight the spread of the mafia.

The job of the Feds was to fight crime across the entire country, but so concentrated was the organized crime in Moscow, much of it economic, that the Moscow Organized Crime Control Department or GUVd, became almost as big as its Federal counterpart.

The GUVd had had only moderate success until the mid-nineties, when it was taken over by General of Militia Valentin Petrovsky, who became the senior-ranking general of the Collegium controlling it.

He was an out-of-town appointment, posted in from the industrial city of Nizhny Novgorod, where he had

established the reputation of a no-bribe 'hard man'. Like Elliott Ness he inherited a situation resembling Chicago under Al Capone.

Unlike the leader of the Untouchables, he had a lot more firepower and a lot fewer civil rights to bother about.

He started his reign by firing a dozen top officers whom he designated as being 'too close' to the subject at hand, organized crime. 'Too close!' yelled the FBI liaison officer at the US embassy. 'They were on the goddamn payroll.'

Petrovsky then ran a series of covert will-they-take-a-bribe tests on some of the senior investigators. Those who told the bribe-offerers to get lost received promotion and big pay hikes. When he had a reliable and honest taskforce to hand, he declared war on organized crime. His Anti-Gang Squad became more feared among the underworld than any previously, and he was nicknamed 'Molotok', meaning 'hammer'.

Like any honest cop he did not win them all. The cancer ran too deep. Organized crime had friends in high places. Too many gangsters went into court and came back out again with their smile still in place.

Petrovsky's response was not to be overly careful about taking prisoners. To back their detectives, both Federal and City Anti-Gang divisions had armed troops. Those of the Federal militia were called the OMON, and Petrovsky's own Rapid Reaction Force the SOBR.

In his early days Petrovsky led raids personally, without forewarning, to prevent leaks. If the raided gangsters came quietly they got a trial; if one of them reached under his armpit or sought to destroy evidence or escape, Petrovsky waited until it was all over, said, 'Tut, tut', and called for the body-bags.

By 1998 he realized that the largest mafia group by far, and seemingly the most impregnable, was the Dolgoruki gang, based in Moscow, controlling much of Russia west of the Urals, immensely rich and with its wealth able to buy awesome influence. For two years prior to the winter

Brezhnev and most of the Politburo once lived. Petrovsky lived in a top-floor-but-one flat on Kuruzovsky Prospekt, a block shared by a dozen other senior militia officers.

There was at least one advantage to lumping all these men from the same profession into one building. Private citizens would have become exasperated by the security; militia generals completely understood the need for it.

The car that Monk drove that evening, miraculously acquired or 'borrowed' by Gunayev, was a genuine MVD Militia black Chaika, which came to a stop at the barrier leading to the inner courtyard of the block. One OMON guard gestured for the window to come down, while a second held the car covered with his sub-machine-gun.

Monk offered his ID and his destination, and held his breath. The guard studied the pass, nodded and retired to his booth to make a phone call. Then he returned.

'General Petrovsky asks what your business concerns.'

'Tell the general I have papers from General Chebotaryov, a matter of urgency,' said Monk. He had named the man who would have been his real superior. A second phone conversation took place. Then the OMON guard nodded to his colleague and the barrier came up. Monk parked in a vacant slot and walked inside.

There was a guard on the ground-floor reception desk who nodded him through, and two more outside the elevator on the eighth. They frisked him, checked his attaché case and studied his ID papers. Then one spoke through a door-phone. It opened ten seconds later. Monk knew he had been studied through a hole in the door.

There was a manservant in a white jacket, whose build and demeanour indicated he could serve a lot more than canapés if the occasion required, and then the family atmosphere became clear. A small girl ran out of the sitting-room, stared at him and said, 'This is my dolly.' She held up a flaxen-haired doll in a nightdress.

'What?'

'But it's not a *provokatsia*. It's been checked out. You could second-check in the morning. N.I. Akopov, the secretary who left the manifesto lying around, is dead. Ditto the old cleaner, Zaitsev. Ditto the British journalist, who actually knew nothing.'

'I remember him,' said Petrovsky pensively. 'It looked like a gangland killing, but no motive. Not for a foreign reporter. You think it was Komarov's Black Guards?'

'Or Dolgoruki killers, hired for the job.'

'So where is this mysterious Black Manifesto?'

'Here, General.' Monk tapped his briefcase.

'You've got a copy? You brought it with you?'

'Yes.'

'But according to this it went to the British embassy. Then to London. How did you get hold of it?'

'I was given it.'

General Petrovsky was staring at him with open suspicion.

'And how the hell did the MVD get hold of a copy? ... You're not from the MVD. Who the hell are you from? SVR? FSB?'

The two organizations he named were the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service and the Federal Security Service, successors to the First and Second Chief Directorates of the old KGB.

'Neither, sir. I'm from America.'

General Petrovsky showed no fear. He just stared at his visitor hard, looking for a trace of threat, for his family was next door and the man could be a paid assassin. But he could work out that the impostor carried no bomb or gun.

Monk began to talk, explaining how the black-covered file in his case had come to the embassy, then London, then Washington. How it had been read by less than a hundred people in two governments. He made no mention of the Council of Lincoln; if General Petrovsky wished to believe Monk represented the US Government, it would do no harm.

'He may not win.'

'True, General, he may not. His star is falling. General Nikolayev denounced him a few days ago.'

'I saw that. Damn surprising, I thought. Anything to do with you?'

'Maybe.'

'Smart.'

'Now the commercial TV stations have stopped broadcasting him. His magazines have ceased production. The latest opinion polls put him at 60 per cent, against 70 last month.'

'So, his ratings are falling, Mr Monk. He may not win.'

'But if he does?'

'I can't go against the entire presidential election. I may be a general, but I'm still just a militiaman. You should go to the Acting President.'

'Palsied by fear.'

'I still can't help.'

'If he thinks he can't win, he could strike at the State.'

'If anyone strikes at the State, Mr Monk, the State will defend itself.'

'Have you ever heard of *Sippenhaft*, General?'

'I don't speak English.'

'It's German. May I have your private number?'

Petrovsky nodded at the nearby phone. Monk memorized it. He collected his files and put them in his bag.

Prince of Greece but ethnically half-Danish and half-Russian, that is, Romanov. Now, let's leave Prince Nicholas on the back burner, still a bachelor.'

He marked Nicholas in blue, for Greece, and pointed back to the Danes at the top.

'The old king also had daughters, and two did pretty well for themselves. Dagmar went off to Moscow to become Empress of Russia; changed her name to Maria, converted to the Orthodox Church, and gave birth to Nicholas II of All the Russias.'

'Murdered with his entire family at Ekaterinburg.'

.. 'Precisely. But look at the other one. Alexandra of Denmark came over here and married our prince, who became Edward VII. They produced the eventual George V. See?'

'So Tsar Nicholas and King George were cousins.'

.. 'Exactly. Their mothers were sisters. So in the First World War the Tsar of Russia and the King of England were cousins. When King George referred to the Tsar as "cousin Nicky" he was being completely accurate.'

'Except that ended in 1918.'

.. 'It did indeed. But now look at the British line.'

.. Dr Probyn reached up and circled in red both King Edward and Queen Alexandra. His red pen ran down a generation to ring King George V.

'Now, he had five sons. John died as a boy, the others grew up. Here they are: David, Albert, Henry and George. It's the last we're interested in, Prince George.'

The red pen ran down from George V to envelop his fourth son, Prince George of Windsor.

.. 'Now, he died in a plane crash in the Second World War, but he had two sons, both alive today. Here they are, but it's the younger we must concentrate on.'

The red pen ran down to the bottom line to ring the second English prince.

.. 'Now follow the line back,' said Dr Probyn. His father was Prince George, his grandfather King George but his great-grandma was the sister of the Tsar's mum. Two Danish princesses, Dagmar and Alexandra. This man is

'Yes, of course. And both served in the British Army, rising to the rank of Major.'

'Then what about the elder brother?'

'Ah, you mentioned age, Sir Nigel. The elder is sixty-four, outside your guideline. The younger was fifty-seven this year. That's almost all you asked for. Born a prince of a reigning house, cousin of the Queen, one marriage, a son of twenty, married to an Austrian countess, quite accustomed to all those ceremonies, still vigorous, a former army man. But the killer is, he was in the Intelligence Corps, did the full Russian course and is damn near bilingual.'

Dr Probyn stood back from his multicoloured chart, beaming. Sir Nigel stared at the face in the photograph.

'Where does he live?'

'In the week, here in London. At weekends, at his place in the country. It's listed in Debrett.'

'Perhaps I should have a word,' mused Sir Nigel. 'One last thing, Dr Probyn. Is there any other man who fulfils all the qualifications so completely?'

'Not on this planet,' said the herald.

That weekend Sir Nigel Irvine, having obtained his appointment, drove to western England to see the younger of the two princes at his country house. He was courteously received and gravely listened to. Finally the prince escorted him to his car.

'If half what you say is true, Sir Nigel, I find it perfectly extraordinary. Of course, I have followed events in Russia from the media. But this . . . I shall have to consider carefully, consult my family extensively, and of course ask for a private meeting with Her Majesty.'

'It may never happen, sir. There may never be a plebiscite. Or the people's reply might be the reverse.'

'Then, we shall have to wait until that day. Safe journey, Sir Nigel.'

On the third floor of the Metropol Hotel is situated one of the finest traditional Russian restaurants of Moscow. The Boyarsky Zal, or Boyars' Hall, is named after the

cenotaph in Moscow to the war dead. Their own cults of personality had been more important, despite the fact that neither of them would have been on top of Lenin's Mausoleum to take the salute on May Day, had it not been for the millions who died between 1941 and 1945.

Then in 1966, with Khrushchev gone, the Politburo had finally ordered the construction of a cenotaph and an Eternal Flame to the memory of the Unknown Soldier.

Still, no open space was employed. The memorial was tucked away under the trees of the Alexandrovsky Gardens, close by the Kremlin wall in a position that would never catch the eye of those in the endless queue to see Lenin's embalmed remains.

After the May Day parade that year, when the wide-eyed ten-year-old cadet had watched the rolling tanks, guns and rockets, the goose-stepping troops and the dancing gymnasts pouring across Red Square, his uncle had taken him by the hand and led him down Kremlev Alley between the gardens and the Manege.

Under the trees was a flat-topped slab of red polished granite. Beside it burned a flame in a bronze bowl.

On the slab were written the words: Your grave is unknown, your achievement immortal.

'I want you to make me a promise, boy,' said the colonel.

'Yes, Uncle.'

'There are a million of them out there, between here and Berlin. We don't know where they lie, in many cases who they were. But they fought with me, and they were good men. Understand?'

'Yes, Uncle.'

'Whatever they promise you, whatever money, or promotion, or honours they offer you, I don't want you ever to betray these men.'

'I promise, Uncle.'

The colonel slowly raised his hand to the peak of his cap. The cadet followed suit. A passing crowd in from the provinces, sucking ice creams, watched curiously.

The overnight sleeper train from Kiev, capital of the independent republic of the Ukraine, rumbled through the freezing darkness towards Moscow.

In the sixth carriage, compartment 2B, the two Englishmen sat and played gin rummy. Brian Vincent checked his watch.

'Half an hour to the border, Sir Nigel. Better get ready for bed.'

'I suppose so,' said Nigel Irvine. Still fully dressed he clambered to the top bunk and drew the blankets to his chin.

'Look the part?' he asked.

The ex-soldier nodded. 'Leave the rest to me, sir.'

There was a brief halt at the border. The Ukrainian officials on the train had already checked the two passports. The Russians boarded at the halt.

Ten minutes later there was a tap on the door of the sleeper compartment. Vincent opened up.

'Da?'

'*Pasport, pozhaluysta?*'

There was only a dim blue light inside the compartment and, though the light in the corridor was yellow and brighter, the Russian inspector had to peer.

'No visa,' he said.

'Of course not. These are diplomatic passports. Require no visa.'

The Ukrainian pointed to the word in English on the cover of each passport.

'Diplomat,' he said.

The Russian nodded, slightly embarrassed. He had an instruction from the FSB in Moscow, an all-crossing-point alert to watch for a name and a face or both.

'The old man,' he said, gesturing at the second passport.

'He's up there,' said the young diplomat. 'Actually, as you see he's very old. He's not feeling well. Do you have to disturb him?'

'Who is he?'

'Well, actually he's the father of our ambassador in

'Would you like one, Sir Nigel?'

'Not for me,' said Irvine. 'Upsets the tummy, burns the throat. But I will join you with something else.'

He unscrewed a silver hip-flask from his attaché case and tipped a measure into the silver cup attached. He raised it towards Vincent and took an appreciative sip. It was Mr Trubshaw's Club vintage port from St James's.

'I actually think you're enjoying all this,' said ex-Sergeant Vincent.

'My dear boy, I haven't had such fun in years.'

The train deposited them at the Moscow terminus just after dawn. The temperature was fifteen below zero.

However bleak a railway station in winter may appear to those hurrying home to a blazing hearth, they are still a lot warmer than the streets. When Sir Nigel and Vincent stepped down from the Kiev overnight express, the concourse of the Kursk station was awash with the cold and hungry poor of the city.

They huddled as close as they could to the warm engines, sought to catch the occasional wave of heat emerging from a café or simply lay on the concrete trying to survive another night.

'Stay very close to me, sir,' muttered Vincent as they moved towards the ticket barrier, beyond which was the open concourse. As they were heading to the taxi rank, a number of the derelicts approached, hands out, heads muffled in scarves, faces unshaven, eyes sunken.

'Dear God, this is awful,' muttered Sir Nigel.

'Don't reach for your money, you'll start a riot,' snapped his bodyguard. Despite his age, Sir Nigel was carrying his own grip and attaché case, leaving Vincent with one free hand. The former Special Forces soldier had it lodged under his left armpit, indicating that he had a gun and would use it if he had to.

In this manner he shepherded the older man ahead of him, through the crowd towards the outside platform where a few taxis waited hopefully. As he reached a supplicant and aside Sir Nigel heard the rumour of his

It was the message that had brought him from London-Heathrow to Kiev and thence by train to Moscow.

But the message had also been caught by FAPSI, now working almost full-time for Colonel Greshin. The senior director of FAPSI conferred with Greshin while the Kiev-Moscow train steamed through the night.

'We damn near had him,' said the director. 'He was in the Arbat district, while last time he was out near Sokolniki. So he's moving around.'

'The Arbat?' queried Greshin eagerly. 'The Arbat district is barely half a mile from the Kremlin walls.'

'There is another danger I should warn you about, Colonel. If he's using the sort of computer we think he is, he need not necessarily be present when transmissions take place or are received. He can pre-set it and leave.'

'Just find the set,' ordered Greshin. 'He'll have to return to it, and when he does, I'll be waiting.'

'If he makes two more, or a single one lasting half a second, we'll have the source. To within a city block, maybe the building.'

What neither man knew was that, according to Sir Nigel Irvine's plan, Monk would need to make at least three more transmissions to the West.

'He's back, Colonel Greshin.'

The voice of Father Maxim down the phone was squeaky with tension. It was six in the evening, pitch dark outside and freezing cold. Greshin was still in his desk in the house off Kreslinsky Boulevard. He had just been about to leave when the call came. As per instructions, the switchboard operator heard the word 'Maxim' and passed the call straight to the Head of Security.

'Calm yourself, Father Maxim, who's back?'

'The Englishman. The old Englishman. He's been with His Holiness for an hour.'

'He can't!'

Grishin had spread a large sum of money throughout the Immigration Division of the Interior Ministry and the FSB counter-intelligence apparatus to receive forewarning, and it had not come.

'Do you know where he is staying?'

'No, but he used the same limousine.'

The National, thought Grishin. The old fool has gone to the same hotel. He was still bitterly conscious that he had lost the old spymaster the last time because 'Mr Trubshaw' had moved too fast for him. This time there would be no mistake.

'Where are you now?'

'In the street, using my portable.'

'It's not secure. Go to the usual place and wait for me there.'

'I should get back, Colonel. I will be missed.'

'Listen, fool, ring the residence and tell them you are feeling unwell. Say you have gone to the chemist for medication. But get to the meeting-place and wait.'

He slammed the phone down, picked it up and ordered his deputy, an ex-major of Border Guards Directorate, KGB, to report to his office immediately.

'Bring ten men, the best, in civilian clothes, and three cars.'

Fifteen minutes later he spread a photograph of Sir Nigel Irvine in front of his deputy.

'That's him. Probably accompanied by a younger man, dark-haired, fit-looking. They're at the National. I want two in the lobby, covering the elevators, the reception and the doors. Two in the downstairs café. Two on the street on foot, four in two cars. If he arrives, watch him go in, then let me know. If he's there, I don't want him to come out without my knowing.'

'If he leaves by car?'

'Follow, unless it's clear he's heading for the airport. Then arrange a car crash. He does not reach the airport.'

'Yes, Colonel.'

When the deputy had gone to brief his team, Grishin phoned another expert he had on the payroll, a former

sneak-thief specializing in hotels, who reckoned he could unlock any hotel door in Moscow.

'Get your kit together, get to the Intourist Hotel, sit in the lobby and keep your mobile switched on. I want you to take a hotel room for me, tonight, hour unknown. I'll call you when I need you.'

The Intourist Hotel is 200 yards from the National, round the corner in Tverskaya Street.

Colonel Grishin was at the church of All Saints in Kulishki thirty minutes later. The worried priest, beaded with sweat in the heat, was waiting for him.

'When did he arrive?'

'Unannounced, about four o'clock. But His Holiness must have been expecting him. I was asked to show him straight up. With his interpreter.'

'How long were they together?'

'About an hour. I served a samovar of tea, but they ceased talking while I was in the room.'

'You listened at the door?'

'I tried, Colonel. It was not easy. The cleaning staff were about, those two nuns. Also the Archdeacon, his private secretary.'

'How much did you hear?'

'A bit. There was much talk of some prince. The Englishman was proposing a foreign prince to the Patriarch, in some capacity. I heard the phrase "the Romanov blood" and "extremely suitable". The old man speaks softly, not that it matters; I can't understand English. Fortunately the interpreter speaks louder.'

'The Englishman did most of the talking, His Holiness most of the listening. Once I could see him studying a plan of some sort. Then I had to move.'

'I knocked and went back in to ask if they wanted the samovar replenished. There was silence because His Holiness was writing a letter. He said no, and waved me away.'

Grishin was pensive. The word 'prince' made perfect sense to him, if not to the valet.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Colonel Grishin ordered his driver to park a hundred metres down Okhotny Ryad (Hunter's Row), which makes up the north-western side of Manege Square, where the National is situated.

From inside his car he could see the two vehicles of his watcher team parked near the shopping mall facing the façade of the hotel.

'Wait here,' he told his driver, and got out. Even at seven in the evening it was almost twenty below zero. A few huddled figures shuffled past.

He crossed the highway and tapped on the driver's side window. It creaked in the cold as the electric motor brought it down.

'Yes, Colonel.'

'Where is he?'

'He must be inside, if he was in there before we arrived. No-one has left that even looks like him.'

'Call Kuznetsov. Tell him I need him here.'

The propaganda chief arrived twenty minutes later.

'I need you to play your American tourist again,' said Grishin. He pulled a photograph from his pocket and showed it to Kuznetsov.

'That's the man I'm looking for,' he said. 'Try the names of Trubshaw or Irvine.'

Kuznetsov was back ten minutes later.

'He's in there, under the name of Irvine. He's in his room.'

'Number?'

'Two five two. Is that all?'

'That's all I need.'

Grishin returned to his own car and used his mobile to call the professional lock-pick and room-checker stationed round the corner in the lobby of the National.

'Are you ready?'

'Yes, Colonel.'

'Stay on listening watch. When I give the command, the room I want searched is two five two. I want nothing taken, everything searched. One of my own men is in the lobby. He will come with you.'

'Understood.'

At eight o'clock one of the two men Grishin had posted in the lobby came out. He nodded across the road to his colleagues in the nearest car, then drifted off.

Minutes later two figures in heavy winter coats and fur hats emerged. Grishin could see wisps of white hair escaping from under one of the hats. The men turned left, up the street towards the Bolshoi Theatre.

Grishin called up his sneak-thief. 'He's left the hotel. The room is vacant.'

One of Grishin's cars began to crawl slowly after the walking men. Two more of the watchers, who had been in the National's ground-floor café, came out and turned after the Englishmen. There were four walkers on the street, four more in two cars. Grishin's driver spoke.

'Shall we pick them up, Colonel?'

'No, I want to see where they go.'

There was a chance Irvine would make contact with the American, Monk. If he did, Grishin would have them all.

The two Englishmen paused at the lights where Tverskaya Street leaves the square, waited for the green and crossed. Seconds later the sneak-thief came round the corner from Tverskaya.

He was a thoroughly experienced man and always looked the part of a foreign executive, almost the only breed who could still afford the top Moscow hotels. His coat and suit were from London, both stolen, and his air of self-confident ease would fool almost all hotel staff.

Grishin watched him push at the revolving doors of the hotel and disappear inside. Nigel Irvine, the colonel had been happy to notice, carried no attaché case. If he had one, it would be in his room.

'Move,' he told his driver. The Mercedes eased away

from the kerb and closed to within a hundred yards of the walking men.

'You know we are being followed,' said Vincent conversationally.

'Two walkers up ahead, two behind, a crawling car on the opposite pavement,' said Sir Nigel.

'I'm impressed, sir.'

'My dear boy, I may be old and grey, but I hope I can still spot a tail when it's that big and clumsy.'

Because of its supreme power, the old Second Chief Directorate had seldom bothered to dissimulate on the streets of Moscow. Unlike the FBI in Washington or MI5 in London, the cult of the unspottable tail was never their speciality.

After passing in front of the illuminated splendour of the Bolshoi Theatre and then the smaller Maly Theatre, the two walkers approached a narrow side-street, Theatre Alley.

There was a doorway just before the turning, and a bundle of rags trying to sleep despite the biting cold. Sir Nigel stopped.

Ahead and behind him the Black Guards tried to pretend they were studying empty shop windows.

In the doorway, dimly lit by the street lamps, the bundle stirred and looked up. He was not drunk, but old, the tired face beneath the woollen comforter pinched and lined with years, work and deprivation. On the lapel of the threadbare greatcoat a number of faded medal ribbons hung. Two deep-set, exhausted eyes looked up at the foreigner.

Nigel Irvine, when based in Moscow, had taken the time to study Russian medals. There was one in the stained row of ribbons he recognized.

'Stalingrad?' he asked softly. 'You were at Stalingrad?'

The bundle of wool round the old head nodded slowly.

'Stalingrad,' croaked the old man.

He would have been less than twenty then, in that freezing winter of '42, fighting Von Paulus's Sixth Army for every brick and cellar of the city on the Volga.

Sir Nigel dug into the pocket of his trousers and came up with a bank note. Fifty million roubles, about thirty US dollars.

'Food,' he said in Russian, 'hot soup. A slug of vodka. For Stalingrad.'

He straightened up and walked on, stiff and angry. Vincent caught up. The trailers moved away from their shop windows and resumed the patrol.

'Sweet heaven, what have they come to?' he said to no-one in particular and turned into the side-street.

Grishin's car radio crackled as one of the walkers used his hand-communicator.

'They've turned off. They're going into a restaurant.'

The Silver Age is another completely traditional old-Russian restaurant, situated in a recessed alley round the back of the theatres. It was formerly the Central Russian Bathhouse, its walls covered in tiles and mosaics depicting rustic scenes of long ago. Coming from the bitter cold of the street, the two visitors felt the rush of warm air wash over them.

The restaurant was crowded, almost every table taken. The head waiter scurried forward.

'I'm afraid we are booked out, gentlemen,' he said in Russian. 'A large private party. I am so sorry.'

'I see there is one table left,' replied Vincent in the same language. 'Look, over there.'

There was indeed a single table for four standing empty against the back wall. The waiter looked worried. He realized the two tourists were foreigners, and that would mean payment in dollars.

'I shall have to ask the host of the dinner,' he said, and bustled away. He addressed a handsome, olive-skinned man who sat surrounded by companions at the largest table in the room. The man gazed thoughtfully at the two foreigners near the door and nodded.

The head waiter came back.

'It is permitted. Please follow me.'

Sir Nigel Irvine and Vincent took their seats side by side on the banquette along the wall. Irvine looked across

and nodded his thanks to the patron of the private party. The man nodded back.

They ordered duck with cloudberry sauce and allowed the waiter to propose a Crimean red wine that turned out to be reminiscent of Bull's Blood.

In the alley outside, Grishin's four foot-soldiers had sealed the alley at both ends. The colonel's Mercedes drew up at the entrance to the narrow street. He got out and had a quick conference with his men. Then he returned to his car and used his phone.

'How is it going?' he asked.

From the corridor on the second floor of the National he heard a voice say, 'Still working on the lock.'

Of the four men who had been posted inside the National, two had remained. One was now at the end of the corridor, close to the elevators. His job was to see if anyone got out at the second and turned down the corridor towards room 252. If they did, he would overtake them, whistling a tune, to warn the burglars to leave the door and move on.

His colleague was with the sneak-thief, who was bent over the lock of 252 doing what he did best.

'Tell me when you're in,' said Grishin.

Ten minutes later the lock gave a low click and yielded. Grishin was informed.

'Every paper, every document, photograph and replace,' he said.

Inside Sir Nigel Irvine's room the search was fast and thorough. The thief spent ten minutes in the bathroom, then emerged and shook his head. The drawers of the chest revealed only the to-be-expected array of socks, shirts, under-shorts, handkerchiefs. The drawers of the bedside table were empty. The same applied to the small suitcase stacked on top of the wardrobe, and the pockets of the two suits within it.

The sneak-thief went onto his knees and gave a low, satisfied 'Aaaaaah.'

The attaché case was under the bed, turned right to the centre where it was well out of sight. The thief

retrieved it with a coat-hanger. The numbered locks needed his attention for three minutes.

When the lid came up, he was disappointed. There was a plastic envelope of travellers' cheques which he would have taken but for his orders. A wallet with several credit cards and a bar bill from White's Club in London. A silver hip-flask whose liquid gave an odour with which he was not familiar.

The pockets inside the lid yielded the return half of an airline ticket from Moscow back to London and a street map of Moscow. He scoured the latter to see if any sites were marked, but could find none.

With a small camera he photographed them all. The Black Guard with him reported their finds to Colonel Grishin.

'There should be a letter,' came the metallic voice from the street 500 yards away.

The thief, thus forewarned, re-examined the attaché case and found the false bottom. It contained a long cream envelope, and inside it a single sheet of matching paper with the embossed heading of the Patriarchate of Moscow and All the Russias. This was photographed three times, just to make sure.

'Pack up and leave,' said Grishin.

The two men restored the case to exactly the way it had been before, with the letter back in its envelope and the envelope in the compartment beneath the floor of the case. The case itself, relocked with the numbers on the rollers in exactly the same sequence as found, was pushed back beneath the bed. When the room looked as if no-one had entered it since Sir Nigel Irvine left, the two men departed.

The door of the Silver Age opened and closed with a soft hiss. Grishin and four men crossed the small lobby and pushed aside the heavy drapes that led to the dining area. The head waiter trotted over.

'I am so sorry, gentlemen . . .'

'Get out of my way,' said Grishin without even looking at him.

The waiter was jolted, looked at the four men behind the tail man in the black coat and backed away. He knew enough to recognize serious trouble when he saw it. The four bodyguards might be in civilian clothes but they were all heavily built, with faces that had been in a few brawls. Even without their uniforms, the elderly waiter recognized them for Black Guards. He had seen them in their uniforms on television, strutting battalions flashing their arms up to the leader on the podium, and was wise enough to know that waiters did not tangle with the Black Guards.

The man in charge of them swept the room until his gaze fell on the two foreigners dining on the far side of the salon. He nodded to one of his men to accompany him and the other three to give support from the door. Not, he knew, that he needed any. The younger of the two Englishmen might try to give trouble, but he would last a few seconds.

'Friends of yours?' asked Vincent quietly. He felt nakedly unarmed, and wondered how far the serrated steak knife by his plate might get him. Not very far, was his mental answer.

'I think they are the gentlemen whose printing presses you dented a few weeks ago,' said Irvine. He wiped his mouth. The duck had been delicious. The man in the black coat walked over, stopped and looked down at them. The 'heavy' stood behind him.

'Sir Irvine?' Grishin spoke only Russian. Vincent translated.

'It's Sir Nigel, actually. And to whom do I have the pleasure?'

'Do not play games. How did you get into the country?'

'Through the airport.'

'Lies.'

'I assure you, Colonel . . . it is Colonel Grishin, is it

not . . . my papers are in perfect order. Of course, they are with the hotel reception, or I could show you.'

Grishin experienced a flicker of indecision. When he gave orders to most of the organs of State, with the necessary bribes to back them up, those orders were obeyed. But there *could* have been a failure. Someone would pay.

'You are interfering in the internal affairs of Russia, *anglichanin*. And I do not like it. Your American puppy, Monk, will soon be caught and I shall personally settle accounts with him.'

'Have you finished, Colonel? Because if you have, and since we are in the mood to be frank, let me be equally candid with you.'

Vincent translated rapidly. Grishin stared in disbelief. No-one talked to him like that, least of all a helpless old man. Nigel Irvine raised his eyes from staring at his glass of wine and looked straight at Grishin.

'You are a deeply loathsome individual, and the man you serve is, if possible, even more repugnant.'

Vincent opened his mouth, shut it again, then muttered in English: 'Boss, is this wise?'

'Just translate, there's a good chap.'

Vincent did so. There was a vein tapping rhythmically in Grishin's forehead. The thug behind him looked as if his collar would soon cease to contain his throat.

'The Russian people,' resumed Irvine in a conversational tone of voice, 'may have made many mistakes, but they do not deserve, nor indeed does any nation deserve, scum like you.'

Vincent paused at the word 'scum', swallowed and used the Russian word *pizdyuk*. The tapping vein increased tempo.

'In summary, Colonel Grishin, there are even chances that you and your whoremaster will never rule this great land. Slowly the people are beginning to see through the façade and in thirty days' time you may find that they will change their minds. So, what are you going to do about it?'

'I think,' said Grishin carefully, 'that I shall begin by killing you. Certainly you will not leave Russia alive.'

Vincent translated and then added in English: 'I think he will, too.'

The room had fallen silent and the diners at tables on either side had heard the Russian interchange between Grishin and Irvine, via Vincent. Grishin was not worried. Muscovites out for an evening dinner were neither going to interfere nor recall what they had seen. The Homicide Division was still aimlessly looking for the killers of the London journalist.

'Not the wisest choice you could make,' said Irvine.

Grishin sneered. 'And who do you think will help you? These pigs?'

Pigs was the wrong word. There was a thump at a table to Grishin's left. He half-turned. A gleaming switch-blade had been jammed into the table-top and was still quivering. It might have been the diner's steak knife, but he already had one of those. To the left another diner removed his white napkin from in front of him. Lying underneath it was a Steyr 9-mm.

Grishin muttered over his shoulder to the Black Guard behind him: 'Who are these?'

'They're Chechens,' hissed the guard.

'All of them?'

'I'm afraid so,' said Irvine gently as Vincent translated. 'And they really don't like being called pigs. Muslims, you see. With long memories. They can even remember Grozny.'

At the mention of the name of their destroyed capital there was a rattle of metallic clicks as safety catches came off among the fifty diners. Seven handguns were pointing at the three Black Guards by the door. The head waiter was crouched behind his coat, praying that he would see his grandchildren again.

Grishin looked down at Sir Nigel. 'I understand you, anglichanin. But never again. Get out of Russia and stay out. Cease interfering in her internal affairs. Force yourself to never seeing your American friend again.'

He turned on his heel and stalked towards the door. His guards followed him out.

Vincent let out a long exhalation. 'You knew about the people around us, didn't you?'

'Well, I hoped my message had got through. Shall we go?'

He raised his glass with the last of the strong red wine to the room.

'Gentlemen, your very good health, and my thanks.'

Vincent translated and they left. They all left. The Chechens staked out the hotel through what remained of the night and escorted the visitors to Sheremetyevo the next morning where they boarded their flight for London.

'I don't care what the offer, Sir Nigel,' said Vincent as the British Airways jet banked over the Moskva and turned west. 'But I am not, repeat not, going back to Moscow.'

'Well, that's fine, because neither am I.'

'And who's the American?'

'Ah, I'm afraid he's still down there somewhere. Living at the edge, right at the edge. And he's rather special.'

Umar Gunayev let himself in without knocking. Monk was at a table, studying a large-scale map of Moscow. He looked up.

'We have to talk,' said the Chechen leader.

'You are not happy,' said Monk. 'I'm sorry.'

'Your friends have left. Alive. But what happened at the Silver Age last night was crazy. I agreed because I owe you a debt, from long ago. But we are running out of debt. And the debt is from me alone. My men do not need to be put in danger because your friends want to play crazy games.'

'I'm sorry. The old man had to come to Moscow. He had a meeting, very important. No-one could handle it except him. So he came. Grishin discovered he was here.'

'Then he should have stayed in the hotel to eat. He would have been reasonably safe in there.'

'Apparently he needed to see Grishin, to talk to him.'

'To talk to him like that? I was sitting three tables away. He practically asked to be killed.'

'I don't understand either, Umar. Those were his instructions.'

'Jason, there are 2,500 private security companies in this country and 800 of them in Moscow. He could have hired fifty men from any one of them.'

With the rise of gangsterdom, another mushroom industry had been that of private guards. Gunayev's figures were quite accurate. The security companies tended to draw their men from the same ex-military units; there were ex-army, marines, special forces, paras, militia, KGB, all available for hire.

By 1999 the total employment figure for security men across the Russian nation was 800,000, and a third of them were in Moscow. In theory the militia was the licensing authority for all security companies and had a duty under the law to check out all recruits to the payroll, their criminal records if any, their suitability, sense of responsibility, weapons carried, how many, what type and what for.

That was the theory. In practice the well-stuffed envelope could procure all the licences needed. So useful was the cover of 'security company' that the gangs simply formed and registered their own so that every hoodlum in town could produce identification to show he was a 'security guard permitted to carry what he wore under his left armpit.

'The trouble is, Umar, they're buyable. They see Grishin and they know they can double their fee; they would change sides and do the job themselves.'

'So you use my men, because they will not betray you?'

'I had no choice.'

'You know Grishin will now be completely aware who has been shielding you? If he was ever puzzled before, he will not be now. Life is going to get very hard from now on. Already I hear word from the street that the Dolgoruki have been told to tool up for a major

found in Sir Nigel Irvine's attache case. It was on the official paper of the Patriarchate and began with the words 'Your Royal Highness'. The signature and seal were those of His Holiness Alexei II.

'What is this?'

'Mr President, the foreign conspiracy being mounted against you is perfectly clear. It is in two parts. Internally, here in Russia, it is one of destabilization of your election campaign, the spreading of alarm and despondency, based on the selective showing of your private manifesto to certain persons.

'That has resulted in the sabotage of the printing presses, the pressure by the banks to terminate the nationwide broadcasts and the denunciation from that old fool of a general. It has caused damage but it cannot stop your victory.

'The second part of the conspiracy is in its way even more dangerous. It proposes the replacement of yourself by a restoration of the Throne of All the Russias. For his own self-interest, the Patriarch has fallen for this. What you have before you is his personal letter to a certain prince, living in the West, supporting the concept of restoration and agreeing that if this is accepted the Church will propose that the invitation go to this man.'

'And your proposal, Colonel?'

'Quite simple, Mr President. Without a candidate, the conspiracy collapses.'

'You know of a man who can . . . discourage this noble gentleman?'

'Permanently. He is very good. Accustomed to working in the West. Speaks several languages. He works for the Dolgoruki, but can be hired. His last contract concerned two renegades of the mafia who were charged with depositing twenty million dollars in London but decided to divert it to themselves. They were found two weeks ago in a flat in Wimbledon, a suburb of London.'

'Then I think we need the services of this man, Colonel.'

'Leave it to me, Mr President. Within ten days there will be no candidate.'

Then, Grishin thought as he returned to his office, with Sir Nigel's precious prince on a marble slab and Jason Monk, traced by FAPSI and hanging in a cellar, we shall send Sir Nigel Irvine a packet of photographs that will really make his Christmas.

The head of the GUVB had finished his dinner and was sitting with his small daughter on his knee watching her favourite cartoon show when the phone rang. His wife answered.

'It's for you.'

'Who is it?'

'He just says: the American.'

The militia general eased Tatiana onto the floor and rose.

'I'll take it in the study.'

When he had closed the door and lifted the receiver he heard the click of his wife replacing the extension.

'Yes?'

'General Petrovsky?'

'Yes.'

'We spoke the other day.'

'We did.'

'I have some information you might find useful. Do you have pen and paper?'

'Where are you speaking from?'

'A phone booth. I don't have long. Please hurry.'

'Go ahead.'

'Komarov and Grishin have persuaded their friends the Dolgoruki gang to launch a war. They are going to take on the Chechen mafia.'

'So, it's dog-eat-dog. I should worry.'

'Except the World Bank delegation is in Moscow negotiating the next round of economic credits. Maybe. If the streets are a hail of bullets, the Acting President, trying to look good both in the eyes of the world and for his election prospects, will not be

happy. He might wonder why it had to be now.'

'Go on.'

'Six addresses. Please take them down.'

Monk reeled them off while General Petrovsky took notes.

'What are they?'

'The first two are arsenals, packed with Dolgoruki weaponry. The third is a casino; in the basement are most of their financial records. The last three are warehouses. They contain 'twenty million dollars' worth of contraband goods.'

'How do you know this?'

'I have friends in low places. Do you know these two officers?'

Monk gave him two names.

'Of course. One senior deputy of mine and one squad commander of the SOBR troops. Why?'

'They are both on the Dolgoruki payroll.'

'You'd better be certain, American.'

'I am. If you want to mount any raids, I'd keep the notice very short and those two out of the picture.'

'I know how to do my job.'

The phone hung up. General Petrovsky replaced the receiver thoughtfully. If this bizarre foreign agent was right, the information was priceless. He had a choice. Let the gang war rip or mount a series of body blows on the major mafia syndicate at a moment likely to receive ringing congratulations from the presidency.

He had 3,000 Rapid Reaction Force troops at his disposal, the SOBR, mainly young and eager. If the American was only half-right about Igor Komarov and his plans after taking power, there would be no place in the New Russia for himself, his gang-busters or his troops. He returned to the sitting-room.

The cartoons were over. Now he would never know if Wiley Coyote had got the roadrunner for supper or not.

'I'm going back to the office,' he told his wife 'I'll be there all night and most of tomorrow'

* * *

of a manor house in the countryside, far to the west, were typed on the back.

'A prince,' he murmured. 'I am going up in the world.'

'Keep your sense of humour to yourself,' said Grishin. 'It's a soft target. No personal security worth the name. By 25 December.'

The Mechanic considered. Too quick. He needed to prepare. He was alive and free because he took meticulous precautions, and they took time.

'New Year's Day,' he said.

'Very well. You have a price.'

The Mechanic named it.

'Agreed.'

Plumes of white-frosted breath rose from both men. The Mechanic recalled seeing on the television a religious revivalist rally at which a charismatic young priest had been calling for a return to God and the tsar. So that was Grishin's game. He regretted not doubling his price.

'That's it?' he asked.

'Unless you have more you need to know.'

The executioner slipped the photograph inside his coat.

'No,' he said, 'I think I know all I need to. Nice to do business with you, Colonel.'

Grishin turned and gripped the man's arm. The Mechanic looked down at the gloved hand until the grip was released. He did not like to be touched.

'There must be no mistakes, on target or timing.'

'I do not make mistakes, Colonel. Or you would not have asked for me. I will mail you the number of my Liechtenstein account. Good-day to you.'

In the small hours of the morning following the raids by the skating-rink in Gorky Park, ~~General Petrov's~~ six simultaneous raids went in.

The two informers had been ~~seen in a~~ in the officers' club at the SOBR ~~where the~~ with enough vodka to render ~~any~~ ~~any~~ Rooms had been provided for ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~

Zhitny Square, had been on the phone to offer their congratulations.

The mid-morning radio news carried the first bulletins of the affair and at midday there was a fairly full report on the TV news. The number of fatalities among the gangsters, the newscaster intoned, had risen to sixteen, while among the Rapid Reaction Force the casualties were limited to one seriously injured with a bullet in the stomach and one slight flesh wound. Twenty-seven mafiosi had been detained alive, of which seven were in hospital, and two were delivering lengthy statements to the GUVU.

This last allegation was not actually true, but had been released to the media by Petrovsky to cause even further panic among the leaders of the Dolgoruki clan.

The latter were indeed in a state of trauma, as they met in a sumptuous and extremely well-guarded mansion well out of town, a mile and a half from the Arkhangelskoye Bridge over the Moskva. The only emotion transcending their panic was that of rage. Most were convinced that the sidelining of their two informers, the element of complete surprise the SOBR had achieved and the accuracy of their knowledge pointed the finger in the direction of a major leak.

Even as they deliberated, word came in from their street people that the buzz was about to the effect the leak had come from a loose-talking senior officer of the Black Guards. Considering the millions of dollars the Dolgoruki had put behind Igor Komarov's election campaign, they were not amused.

They would never learn that the street rumour had in fact been started by the Chechens on the advice of Jason Monk. The clan chiefs resolved, however, that before any further tranche of money was released to the UPF, there would have to be a serious explanation.

Just after three, Umar Gunayev, backed by heavy personal protection, came to visit Monk. This time he was living with a Chechen family in a small apartment just north of the Sokolniki Park Exhibition Centre.

'I don't know how you managed it, my friend, but a very large bomb went off last night.'

'It's a question of self-interest,' said Monk. 'Petrovsky had a considerable interest in pleasing his superiors right up to the office of the Acting President during the week of the visit of the World Bank team. That's all.'

'All right. Well, the Dolgoruki are in no position to launch a war against me. They will spend weeks trying to repair the damage.'

'And to trace the leak inside the Black Guards,' Monk reminded him.

Umar Gunayev tossed a copy of *Segodnya* onto his lap.

'Have a look at page three,' he suggested.

There was a report from Russia's leading opinion-poll organizers to suggest electoral support for the UPF was at 55 per cent and falling.

'These polls are mainly taken in the cities,' said Monk. 'For ease and convenience. Komarov is stronger in the cities. The key will lie with the overlooked, teeming masses in the countryside.'

'You really think Komarov can actually be defeated at the polls?' asked Gunayev. 'Six weeks ago there would not have been a chance.'

'I don't know,' said Monk.

This was not the moment to tell the Chechen leader that defeat at the polls was not what Sir Nigel Irvine had in mind. He recalled the old spymaster, still revered in the world of the Great Game as the ultimate practitioner of deception by disinformation, sitting in the library at Castle Forbes with the family Bible open in front of him.

'The key is Gideon, dear boy,' he was saying. 'Think like Gideon.'

'You're miles away,' said Gunayev. Monk snapped out of his reverie.

'Sorry, you were right. Tonight I have to visit the Patriarch again. For the last time. I will need your help.'

'To get in?'

'I think to get out. There is a good chance Grishin has the place under surveillance, as I told you. One man

would do, but that man will call up others while I am inside.'

'We'd better start planning,' said the Chechen.

Colonel Anatoli Grishin was in his apartment preparing for bed when his mobile phone rang. He recognized the voice without introduction.

'He's here. He's here again.'

'Who?'

'The American. He's back. He's with His Holiness now.'

'He suspects nothing?'

'I don't think so. He came alone.'

'As a priest?'

'No. All in black, but civilian dress. The Patriarch seemed to be expecting him.'

'Where are you?'

'In the pantry, making coffee. I must go.'

The phone clicked off. Grishin tried to control his elation. The hated American agent was almost in his grasp. This time there would be no East Berlin. He called the leader of the inner-core group of the Black Guards' enforcers.

'I need ten men, three cars, mini-Uzis, now. Seal both ends of a street called Chisti Pereulok. I'll meet you there in thirty minutes.'

It was half past midnight.

At ten minutes after one o'clock Monk rose and bade the Patriarch goodnight.

'I don't suppose we shall meet again, Your Holiness. I know you will do the best you can for this land and people you love so much.'

Alexei II rose also and accompanied him to the door.

'With God's good grace, I shall try. Goodbye, my son. May angels guard you.'

For the moment, thought Monk, as he descended the stairs, a few warriors from the North Caucasus will do nicely.

The fat valet was there as usual, holding out his coat.

'No coat, thank you, Father,' he said. The last thing he needed was something to slow him up. He took out his mobile phone and tapped in a number. It was answered at the first ring.

'Monakh,' he said.

'Fifteen seconds,' replied a voice. Monk recognized Magomed, the senior of the protectors Gunayev had assigned to him. Monk pulled the street door open by four inches and peered out. Down the narrow street a single Mercedes waited near a dim street lamp. It contained four men, one at the wheel and three with mini-Uzi machine-pistols. The white plume rising from the rear in the bitter night indicated the engine was running.

In the other direction Chisti Pereulok debouched into a small square. Waiting in the shadows of the square were two other black cars. On foot or four wheels, anyone wishing to leave the alley would have to pass the ambush.

At the end where the single car waited another vehicle, with its taxi light burning yellow above the windscreen, approached. The watchers let it come abreast. Clearly it had come to pick up their target. Bad luck on the taxi-driver; he would die, too.

The taxi came abreast of the Mercedes and there was a double click as two grapefruit-sized pieces of metal hit the icy road and skittered under the saloon. Hardly had the taxi cleared the Mercedes than Monk, behind the street door which was by then an inch open, heard the double 'whump' of the grenades going off.

Simultaneously a large delivery truck rolled into the square at the other end, rumbled across the entrance to the alley and stopped. The driver leapt from the cab into the road and began to sprint down the alley.

Monk nodded once at the trembling priest, opened the door wide and stepped into the street. The taxi was almost opposite him, rear door swinging open. He threw himself inside. From the front seat a strong arm reached back and dragged him the rest of the way. The running truck driver followed.

In reverse gear the taxi roared back the way it had come. From behind the immobile truck came a spray of bullets as someone flat on the ground used their sub-machine-gun. Then the two bombs under the chassis of the truck went off and the firing ceased.

One of the men had managed to get out of the Mercedes and was standing groggily by the rear door, trying to raise his gun. The rear fender of the taxi caught him in the shins and sent him flying.

Out of the alley, the taxi slewed sideways, skidded on the ice, recovered, moved into forward gear and sped off. The petrol tank in the Mercedes exploded and finished the job.

Magomed turned from the front seat and Monk caught the flash of his teeth beneath the black Zapata moustache.

'You make life interesting, *amerikanets*.'

In the small square at the far end of the alley Colonel Grishin stood contemplating the ruined truck that blocked the access. Beneath it, two of his men were lying dead, killed by two small charges lashed beneath the chassis and triggered from inside the cab. Peering round the edge of the vehicle he could see his other car burning at the far end of the side-street.

He took his mobile and punched in seven numbers. He heard the mobile phone he had dialled trill twice. Then a panicky whisper said, 'Da?'

'He got away. You have what I want?'

'Da.'

'Usual place. At ten this morning.'

The small church of All Saints in Kulishki was almost empty at that hour.

Father Maxim was standing by the right-hand wall, holding a guttering candle bought from the store by the main door, when Colonel Grishin appeared beside him.

'The American got away,' he said quietly.

'I am sorry. I tried.'

'How did he guess?'

'He seemed to suspect the residence might be under some kind of surveillance.' As usual the priest was sweating. 'He produced a mobile phone from his waist-band and called somebody.'

'Start at the beginning.'

'He arrived about ten past twelve. I was about to go to bed. His Holiness was still up, working in his study. He always is, at that hour. The street doorbell rang, but I did not hear it. I was in my room. The Cossack night-guard answered it. Then I heard voices. I came out of my room and there he was, standing in the hall.'

'I heard His Holiness call from upstairs. "Show the gentleman up," he said. Then he leaned over the banister, saw me and asked for some coffee. I went back to my pantry and phoned you.'

'How long until you entered the room?'

'Not long. A few minutes. I hurried as fast as I could in order to miss as little as possible. I was there within five minutes.'

'And the tape-recorder I gave you?'

'I switched it on before I went in with the coffee. They stopped talking when I knocked. While putting down the coffee I spilled some sugar lumps onto the floor, and went down on my knees to pick them up.'

'His Holiness said not to bother, but I insisted and while down there slipped the recorder under the desk. Then I left.'

'And at the end?'

'He came downstairs alone. I was waiting with his coat, but he did not want it. The Cossack was in his small room beside the door. The American seemed nervous. He produced a mobile phone and dialled. Someone answered, and he just said: "Monakh."

'Nothing else?'

'No, Colonel, just Monakh. Then he listened. I didn't hear the answer because he kept the phone close to his ear. Then he waited. He pulled the street door open a little way and looked out. I was still holding his coat.'

Grishin considered. The old Englishman could have

told Monk he had himself been traced via the hotel limousine. It would be enough to warn the American the patriarchal residence could be under surveillance.

'Go on, Father.'

'I heard the roar of a car engine, then two explosions. The American tore the door open and ran. Then I heard gunfire and jumped back from the open door.'

Grishin nodded. The American was smart, but he knew that. The man had arrived at the right answer for the wrong reasons. He, Grishin, had indeed had the patriarchal residence under surveillance, but from the inside, from the renegade priest.

'And the tape?'

'When the explosions took place outside, the Cossack rushed out with his gun. The American had run out and left the door open. The Cossack looked out, shouted 'Gangsters' and slammed the door closed. I ran upstairs just as His Holiness came out of his library to lean over the banister and ask what was going on. While he was there I recovered the coffee cups and the tape-recorder.'

Without a word Grishin held out his hand. Father Maxim delved into a side pocket of his cassock and produced a small tape, the sort used by miniature recorders of the type he had handed the priest at their last meeting.

'I hope I did the right thing,' said the priest tremulously. Grishin sometimes felt he would dearly like to strangle the toad with his bare hands. Perhaps one day he would.

'You have done exactly the right thing, Father,' he said. 'You have done exceptionally well.'

In his car on the way back to his office Colonel Grishin looked at the tape again. He had lost six good men during the small hours, and lost his quarry. But he held in his hand the record of exactly what the interfering American had said to the Patriarch, and vice versa. One day, he vowed, both would pay for their crimes. For the moment, so far as he was concerned, the day would certainly end much better than it started.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Colonel Anatoli Grishin sat all the rest of that morning, through the lunch hour and into the afternoon, locked in his office listening to the tape of the conference between Patriarch Alexei II and Jason Monk.

At times there were mumbled passages, the tinkle of cups being stirred, but most of the passages were clear enough.

The tape began with the sound of a door opening - Father Maxim entering the room with a tray of coffee. The sounds were muffled because the recorder at that time had been in the side pocket of his cassock.

Grishin heard the tray being placed on the desk, then a muffled voice saying: 'Don't bother.'

There was an equally muffled response as Father Maxim knelt on the carpet, supposedly picking up the dropped sugar lumps.

The sound quality improved as the informer removed the recorder from his pocket and slipped it under the desk. The voice of the Patriarch was clear enough saying to Father Maxim: 'Thank you, Father, that will be all.'

There was silence until the sound of a door closing, the withdrawal of the informer. Then the Patriarch said: 'Now, perhaps you will explain what you have come to tell me.'

Monk began to speak. Grishin could distinguish the slight nasal twang of the American speaking fluent Russian. He began to take notes.

He listened to the forty-minute conversation three times before he began to write a verbatim transcript. This was not a job for any secretary, however trusted.

Page after page was covered in his neat Cyrillic script. Sometimes he paused, played back, craned to hear the words and then resumed writing. When he was certain he had every word, he ceased writing.

There was the sound of a chair moving back, then Monk's voice saying: 'I don't suppose we shall meet again, Your Holiness. I know you will do the best you can for this land and people you love so much.'

Two sets of footsteps moved across the carpet. More faintly, as they reached the door, Grishin heard Alexei's reply: 'With God's good grace, I shall try.'

The door evidently closed behind Monk. Grishin heard the sound of the Patriarch resuming his seat. Ten seconds later the tape ran out.

Grishin sat back and mulled over what he had heard. The news was as bad as it could conceivably be. How one man, he reflected, could cause such systematic damage was hard to understand. The key, of course, was that damnable act of stupidity by the late N.I. Akopov in leaving the manifesto lying around to be stolen. The damage caused by that single mistake was already incalculable.

Monk clearly had done most of the talking. The earlier interventions by Alexei II had been to indicate that he understood and approved. His own contribution came towards the end.

The American had not been idle. He revealed that immediately after the New Year a concerted campaign would begin to destroy the electoral chances of Igor Komarov across the country by a process of discreditation and massive publicity.

General Nikolai Nikolayev, it seemed, would resume a series of newspaper, radio and television interviews in which he would denounce the UPF, calling on every soldier and ex-soldier to repudiate the party and vote elsewhere. There were 20 million veterans among the 110 million enfranchised voters. The damage they would do could scarcely be contemplated.

The shutdown of all publicity for Igor Komarov being exercised by both commercial TV channels and the of the bankers, three out of four of them Jewish, and the leader of them all Leonid Bernstein of the Ministry of Federal. That constituted two scores that would have to be settled.

The Patriarch's intervention, coming as it did towards the end of the tape, was perhaps the most potentially damaging of all.

The Acting President, Ivan Markov, would be spending the New Year celebrations with his family away from Moscow. He would return on 3 January. On that day he would receive the Patriarch who intended to make a personal intercession, urging the Acting President to invalidate the candidature of Igor Komarov as an 'unfit person', based upon the existing evidence.

With the proof of gangster linkage provided by Petrovsky and the personal intervention of the Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias, Markov would be minded to do just that. Apart from anything else, he was himself a candidate and did not want to face Komarov at the polls.

Four traitors, Grishin brooded. Four traitors to the New Russia that was destined to come into existence after 16 January, with himself at the head of an élite corps of Black Guards ready to carry out the orders of the Leader. Well, he had spent his life rooting out and punishing traitors. He knew how to deal with them.

He typed personally a fair copy of his own handwritten transcript and asked for an uninterrupted two hours of Komarov's time that evening.

Jason Monk had moved from the flat by Sokolniki Park and was installed in another, from whose windows he could see the crescent atop the mosque where he had first met Magomed, the man now sworn to protect him but who, on that day, would just as easily have killed him.

He had a message to send to Sir Nigel Irvine in London, the second-from-last, if all went according to the old man's plan.

He typed it carefully into his laptop computer, as he had done all the others. When he was finished, he pressed the 'encode' button and the message vanished from the screen, safely encrypted into the jumbled

InTelCor ComSat was drifting through space, heading north for Moscow.

When the technicians of the multinational had devised Monk's coded sender/receiver they had, on instructions, included a total wipe-out code of four digits. This was to protect Monk in the event of capture, provided he would punch in the code before he was taken.

But if his machine was captured intact, so reasoned the chief encoder, a former CIA cryptographer from Warrenton, brought out of retirement for the job, the 'bad guys' could use the machine to send false messages.

So to prove his authenticity, Monk had to include certain harmless words, all in sequence. If a transmission took place without those words, the ex-CIA man would know that whoever was out there – and he had no idea – was off the payroll. At that point he could use the Compuserve mainframe to log into Monk's PC via the satellite and use the same four digits to obliterate its memory, leaving the bad guys with a useless tin can.

Ricky Taylor was already into the mainframe when he hit those four digits. The satellite rolled over Moscow and sent down its 'Are you there, Baby?' call. The laptop replied, 'Yes, I am', and the satellite, obedient to its instructions, wasted it.

The first Monk knew was when he went to check his machine and found his message, in clear, back on the screen. That meant it had been rejected. He negated the message manually, aware that, for reasons beyond his comprehension, something had gone wrong and he was out of contact.

There was an address Sir Nigel Irvine had given him just before he left London. He did not know where it was or who lived there. But it was all he had.

With economy he could compress his last two messages into one, something the spymaster would have to know. That might work forgetting a message out. Receiving any more was out of the question. For the first time, he was completely on his own. No more progress

reports, no more confirmations of action taken, no more instructions.

With the billion-dollar technology down, he would rely on the oldest allies in the Great Game: instinct, nerve and luck. He prayed they would not let him down.

Igor Komarov finished the last page of the transcript and leaned back. He was never a man of high colour, but now, Grishin noted, his face was like a sheet of paper.

'This is bad,' said Komarov.

'Very bad, Mr President.'

'You should have captured him before now.'

'He is being sheltered by the Chechen mafia. This we now know. They live like rats in their own subterranean world.'

'Rats can be exterminated.'

'Yes, Mr President. And they will be. When you are undisputed leader of this country.'

'They must be made to pay.'

'They will. Every last one of them.'

Komarov was still staring at him with those hazel eyes, but they were unfocused, as if their owner were looking to another time and another place, a time in the future, a place of settlement of accounts with his enemies. The two red spots were bright upon the cheekbones.

'Retribution. I want retribution. They have attacked me, they have attacked Russia, attacked the motherland. There can be no mercy for scum like this . . .'

His voice was rising, the hands starting to tremble as the rage cracked the habitual self-control. Grishin knew that if he could argue his point with enough skill he would win his argument. He leaned forward over the desk, forcing Komarov to look him in the eyes. Slowly the demonic rage subsided and Grishin knew he had his attention.

'Listen to me, Mr President. Please listen. What we now know enables me to turn the tables completely. You will have your revenge. Just give me the word.'

'What do you mean?'

'The key to counter-intelligence, Mr President, is knowledge of the enemy's intentions. This we now have. From that stems prevention. It is already taking place. In a few days, there will be no selected candidate for the Throne of All the Russias. Now we have a second revelation of their intentions. Once again I must propose both prevention and retribution, all in one.'

'All four men?'

'There can be no choice.'

'Nothing must be traced back. Not yet. It is too early for that.'

'Nothing will be traced back. The banker? How many bankers have been killed in the past ten years? Fifty? At least. Armed and masked men, a settlement of accounts. It happens all the time.'

'The militiaman? The Dolgoruki gang will be happy to take the contract. How many cops have been wasted? Again, it happens all the time.'

'As for the fool of a general, a burglary that went wrong. Nothing could be more common. And for the priest, a house-servant caught ransacking his study during the night. Shot down by the Cossack guard, who in turn is killed by the thief as he dies.'

'Will anyone believe that?'

'I have a source inside the residence who will swear to it.'

Komarov looked at the papers he had finished reading and the tape beside them. He smiled thinly.

'Of course you do. I need to know no more about all this. I insist I know nothing more of all this.'

'But you do wish the four men bent upon your destruction to cease to function?'

'Certainly.'

'Thank you, Mr President. That is all I need to know.'

The room at the Spartak Hotel had been booked in the name of Kuzichkin, and a man of that name had indeed checked in. Having done so he then walked out again, slipping his room key to Jason Monk as he did so. The

Chechen guards filtered through the lobby, the stairwell and the access to the elevators as he went upstairs. It was as safe a way as any of having twenty minutes on a telephone which, if traced, would reveal only a room in a non-Chechen-owned hotel far from the centre of town.

'General Petrovsky?'

'You again.'

'You seem to have stirred up a hornets' nest.'

'I don't know where you get your information from, American, but it seems to be good.'

'Thank you. But Komarov and Grishin will not take this lying down.'

'What about the Dolgoruki?'

'Bit-part players. The key danger is Grishin and his Black Guards.'

'Was it you who put out the rumour that the source was a senior officer in the Black Guards?'

'Friends of mine.'

'Smart. But dangerous.'

'The weak point for Grishin lies in those papers you captured. I think they prove the mafia has been funding Komarov all along.'

'They are being worked on.'

'So are you, General.'

'What do you mean?'

'Are your wife and Tatiana still there?'

'Yes.'

'I wish you would get them out of town. Now, tonight. Somewhere far away and safe. Yourself too. Move out. Go and live in the SOBR barracks. Please.'

There was silence for a while.

'Do you know something, American?'

'Please, General. Get out of there. While there is time.'

He put the phone down, waited a while and dialled another number. The phone rang on Leonid Bernstein's desk at the Moskovsky Federal Bank headquarters. It was late at night and only a tape-machine answered. Without the banker's private home phone number,

Monk could only pray that Bernstein would access his messages within the next few hours.

'Mr Bernstein, this is the man who reminded you of Babi Yar. Please don't go to the office, however pressing the business. I am sure Komarov and Grishin now know who is behind the shut-down of their TV exposure. You keep your family out of the country; go and join them until it is safe to return.'

He put the phone down again. Though he did not know it, a light flashed on a console in a heavily guarded house miles away and Leonid Bernstein listened to the message in silence.

The third call was to the residence.

'Yes.'

'Your Holiness?'

'Yes.'

'You know my voice?'

'Of course.'

'You should go to the Monastery at Zagorsk. Get inside and stay inside.'

'Why?'

'I fear for you. Last night proved that things are becoming dangerous.'

'I have mass tomorrow at the Danilovsky.'

'The Metropolitan can take your place.'

'I will consider what you say.'

The phone went down. The fourth call was answered at the tenth ring and a gruff voice said: 'Yes?'

'General Nikolayev?'

'Who is . . . wait a minute, I know you. You're that damned Yankee.'

'That's me.'

'Well, no more interviews. Did what you wanted, said my piece. No more, that's it. Hear me?'

'Let's keep it short. You should get out and go to live with your nephew on the base.'

'Why?'

'Certain thugs did not appreciate what you said. I think they might pay you a visit.'

taken apart by half a pound of plastic explosive and the six rushed in. The white-jacketed steward winged one in the shoulder before he was cut down. A thorough search of the flat revealed there was no-one else there and the squad retreated frustrated.

Back on the ground floor they exchanged fire with two more OMON guards who had appeared from the rest area at the back of the block, killed one and lost one of their own. Empty-handed they retreated under fire into the avenue and took off in three waiting GAZ jeeps.

At the patriarchal residence the approach was more subtle. A single man knocked at the street door while six more crouched either side of him out of vision of the peep-hole.

The Cossack inside peered through the hole and used the street intercom to ask who was there. The man at the door held up a valid militia identification and said: 'Police.'

Duped by the ID, the Cossack opened the door. He was shot immediately and his body carried upstairs.

The plan had been to shoot the private secretary with the Cossack's gun, and kill the primate with the same piece that had been used on the Cossack. This gun would then be placed in the hand of the dead secretary, to be found behind the desk.

Father Maxim would then be forced to swear both Cossack and primate had disturbed the secretary rifling the drawers and in the ensuing interchange of fire all three had died. Apart from a huge ecclesiastical scandal, the militia would close the case.

Instead the killers found a fat priest in a soiled night-gown at the top of the stairs screaming 'What are you doing?'

'Where's Alexei?' snarled one of the men in black.

'He left,' babbled the priest, 'he's gone to the Trinity-St Sergius Monastery.'

A search of the private apartments revealed that the Patriarch and the two nuns were not there. Leaving the body of the Cossack, the killer team withdrew.

There were only four men sent to the lonely cottage out along the Minsk Highway. They came out of their saloon car and while one approached the door the other three waited in the darkness of the trees.

It was old Volodya who answered. He was shot in the chest and the four men poured into the house. The wolfhound came at them across the floor of the sitting-room and went for the throat of the leading Black Guard. He threw up an arm and the hound's teeth went deeply into it. A companion blew its head off.

By the embers of the log fire an old man with bristling white whiskers pointed an army service Makarov at the group in the doorway and fired twice. One bullet lodged in the door-jamb and the other hit the man who had just killed his dog.

Then three bullets in quick succession struck the old general in the chest.

Umar Gunayev called shortly after ten in the morning.

'I just drove to my office. There's all hell going on.'

'In what way?'

'Kutuzovsky Prospekt is blocked off. Militia all over the place.'

'Why?'

'Some kind of attack last night on a block inhabited by senior militia officers.'

'That was quick. I'm going to need a safe phone.'

'What about the one where you are?'

'Traceable.'

'Give me half an hour. I'll send some men for you.'

By eleven Monk was installed in a small office in a warehouse full of contraband liquor. A telephone engineer was just finishing.

'It's linked to two cut-outs,' he said, gesturing at the phone. 'If anyone tries to trace a call on it, they'll end up in a café two miles away. It's one of our joints. If they get past that, they'll be led to a phone booth down the street. By then we'll know.'

Monk started with the private number of General

cks. Who the hell were they?
weren't gangsters. They were Black Guards.
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tween the Dolgotuki mafia and the UPF.
ll, they don't. They're trash, mostly casino
ts.'

ishin doesn't know that, General. He fears the
t. Have you heard about Uncle Kolya?
he tank general. What about him?
They got him. A similar killer squad. Last night.
Shit.'

He denounced Komarov. Remember?
Of course. But I never thought they'd go that far.
astards. Thank God politicals aren't my patch. I do
angsters.'

'Not any more. You have contacts in the Militia
Collegium?'

'Of course.'

'Why not tell them? You got it from an underworld
contact.'

Monk replaced the receiver and rang the Moskovsky
Federal.

'Ilya. Mr Bernstein's personal assistant. Is he there?
'One moment, caller.'

Ilya came on the line. 'Who's that?'
'Let's say you nearly put a bullet in my back the other
day,' said Monk in English.

There was a low laugh.

'Yes, I did.'

'Is the boss safe?'

'Miles away.'

'Advise him to stay there.'

'No problem. His private house was attacked last
night.'

'Casualties?'

'Four of our people dead, two of theirs, we think
They ransacked the place.'

'You know who they were.'

arracks. Who the hell were they?
They weren't gangsters. They were Black Guards.
Irishin's thugs. Why?
Those papers you have. They fear they will prove the
between the Dolgoruki mafia and the UPF.
Well, they don't. They're trash, mostly casino
receipts.

Grishin doesn't know that, General. He fears the
worst. Have you heard about Uncle Kolya?

'The tank general. What about him?'
'They got him. A similar killer squad. Last night.'

'Shit.'
'He denounced Komarov. Remember?'
'Of course. But I never thought they'd go that far.
Bastards. Thank God politicals aren't my patch. I do
gangsters.'

'Not any more. You have contacts in the Militia
Collegium?'
'Of course.'

'Why not tell them? You got it from an underworld
contact.'
Monk replaced the receiver and rang the Moskovsky
Federal.

'Ilya. Mr Bernstein's personal assistant. Is he there?'
'One moment, caller.'
Ilya came on the line. 'Who's that?'
'Let's say you nearly put a bullet in my back the other
day,' said Monk in English.

There was a low laugh.
'Yes, I did.'
'Is the boss safe?'
'Miles away.'

'Advise him to stay there.'
'No problem. His private house was attacked
last night.'
'Casualties?'
'Four of our people dead, two of theirs, we
They ransacked the place.'
'You know who they were.'

'We think so.'

'Grishin's Black Guards. And the reason was clearly retribution. The shut-down of Komarov's propaganda broadcasts.'

'They may pay for that. The Boss has a lot of clout.'

'The key lies in the commercial TV companies. Their reporters should have a word with a couple of senior generals of the militia. Ask if they have any intention of interviewing Colonel Grishin concerning widespread rumours . . . etc, etc.'

'They'd better have some proof.'

'No. That's what newshounds are for. They sniff, they dig. Can you get in touch with the Boss?'

'If I have to.'

'Why not put it to him? 'Bye.'

His next call was to the national newspaper *Izvestia*.

'Newsroom.'

Monk affected a gruff accent. 'Get me Senior Reporter Repin.'

'Who is that?'

'Tell him General of the Army Nikolai Nikolayev needs to speak to him urgently. He will remember.'

Repin was the one who had done the interview in the Frunze Officers' Club. He came on the line. 'Yes, General. Repin here.'

'This is not General Nikolayev,' said Monk. 'The general is dead. He was murdered last night.'

'What? Who are you?'

'Just a former tank man.'

'How do you know?'

'Never mind. Do you know where he lived?'

'No.'

'He had a house just off the Minsk Highway. Near the village of Kobyakovo. Why not take a photographer and get the hell out there? Ask for Inspector Novikov.'

He put the phone down. The other major newspaper was *Pravda*, the former organ of the Communist Party, which politically supported the renaissance—neo-Communist Socialist Union Party. But to prov

non-Communist credentials, the party had been trying to woo the Orthodox Church. Monk had studied the paper enough to have memorized the name of the chief crime reporter.

'Put me through to Pamfilov, please.'

'He's out of the office right now.'

Reasonable. He was almost certainly up at Kutuzovsky Prospekt with the rest of the press pack clamouring for details of the attack on Petrovsky's flat.

'He has a mobile?'

'Of course. But I can't give you the number. Can he call you back?'

'No. Contact him and say one of his sources in the militia needs to speak to him urgently. A major tip-off. I need his mobile number. I'll call you back in five minutes.'

On the second call he obtained the number of Pamfilov's mobile and reached him in his car outside the senior police officers' apartment block.

'Pamfilov?'

'Yes. Who is that?'

'I had to lie to get your phone number. We don't know each other. But I may have something for you. There was another attack last night. On the residence of the Patriarch. An attempt to assassinate him.'

'You're crazy. An attempt on the Patriarch? Rubbish. There'd be no motive.'

'Not for the mafia, no. Why not get over there?'

'The Danilovsky Monastery?'

'He doesn't live there. He lives at Number Five, Chisti Pereulok.'

Pamfilov sat in his car listening to the whine of the disconnected phone. He was stunned. Nothing like this had ever happened in his career. If it was half-true, it was the biggest story he would ever handle.

When he arrived at the side-street he found it blocked off. Normally he could flash his press pass and walk past the cordon. Not this time. Fortunately he spotted a militia detective-inspector whom he knew personally

and called out to him. The man walked over to the cordon.

'What's going on?' asked the reporter.

'Burglars.'

'You're Homicide.'

'They killed the nightwatchman.'

'The Patriarch. Alexei II, is he safe?'

'How the fuck do you know he lives here?'

'Never mind. Is he safe?'

'Yes, he's away at Zagorsk. Look, it was just a burglary that went wrong.'

'I have a tip they were after the Patriarch.'

'Bullshit. Just robbers.'

'What's to rob?'

The detective looked worried. 'Where did you get that from?'

'Never mind. Could it be true? Did they steal anything?'

'No. Just shot the guard, searched the house and ran.'

'So they *were* looking for someone. And he wasn't there. Boy, what a story.'

'You be bloody careful,' warned the detective. 'There's no evidence.'

But he was becoming worried. He became even more so when a militiaman beckoned him over to his car. On the phone was a full general of the Praesidium. Within several sentences he began to hint at the same thing as the reporter.

On 23 December the media were in uproar. In the early editions each newspaper concentrated on the particular story to which Monk had directed them. As the journalists read each other's stories, there were copious rewrites that knitted the four attacks together.

The morning television news carried the composite accounts of four separate assassination attempts, one of them successful. In the other three cases, they reported, only extreme luck had saved the intended victims.

No credence was being given to the notion of

burglaries that went wrong. Analysts were at pains to point out that there would be no point in a burglary at the home of a pensioned-off general, nor the apartment of a single senior police officer while ignoring all the other flats in the block, nor on the home of the Patriarch.

Burglary might be the justification for raiding the home of the hugely wealthy banker Leonid Bernstein, but his surviving guards testified that the onslaught had all the hallmarks of a military attack. Moreover, they also reported that the attackers had been looking specifically for their employer. Kidnap was a possibility, or murder. In two cases there was no point in kidnap and in the case of the general it had not been attempted.

Most pundits, however, speculated that the perpetrators must have been the all-pervading gangster underworld, long since the cause of hundreds of murders and kidnaps.

Two commentators went further, pointing out that while organized crime might well have reason to hate General Petrovsky of the gang-busting GUVB, and some might have a score to settle with the banker Bernstein, who could hate an old general and a triple hero to boot, or the Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias?

The editorial writers deplored for the thousandth time the astronomic crime levels in the country and two called on the Acting President to do precisely that – act – to forestall a total breakdown of law and order in the run-up to the crucial elections in twenty-four days' time.

Monk began his second day of anonymous telephoning in the late morning, when the hacks, exhausted from their labours of the previous day, began to trickle into their offices.

A rolled-up tissue in each cheek disguised his voice sufficiently for it not to be recognized as the person of the day before. To each of the possessors of the major bylines in the seven morning and evening newspapers that had carried the four-assassinations

story, he conveyed the same message. *Pamfilov of Pravda and Repin of Pravda*

'You don't know me, and I don't know you. It is more than my life is worth. But if you ask me another I ask you to trust me.

'I am a very senior officer in the *USSR*. I am also a practising Christian. For many years I have been more and more convinced that I am anti-Christian, anti-Church, anti-*USSR* in the inner heart of the *UPF*. Behind what they say is a Church and democracy, state and rule like the *Nazi*.

'Now I have had enough. Colonel Grishin who because Uncle Kolya denounced Komarov. The *USSR* is not fooled. You may not have the influence to force the propaganda broadcasts the *UPF* and was about the general because he the paymasters of the *USSR* check out what mounted those

With that Moscow journal they began to

Leonid B. commercial change in consortium to

General N. extracts of the line: 'Was this

The six early houses, arsenals common known in the *USSR*

check. Every single resume of every senior officer would have to be gone through with a fine comb.

And what did 'senior' mean? How senior? Down two ranks – ten men. Down three ranks – forty men. Down five ranks – almost one hundred. It would be a time-consuming task, and there was no time. In the short term he might have to purge his entire upper echelon, sequester them all in a safe place and forfeit his most experienced commanders. One day, he promised himself, those responsible for this catastrophe would pay, and how they would pay! Starting with Jason Monk. The very thought of the American agent's name caused his knuckles to whiten on the edge of his desk.

Just before five Boris Kuznetsov secured an interview with Komarov. He had been asking for two hours for a chance to see the man he hero-worshipped in order to propose what he felt should be done.

As a student in America Kuznetsov had studied and been deeply impressed by the power of slick and proficient public relations to generate mass support for even the most meretricious nonsense. Apart from his idol Igor Komarov, he worshipped the power of words and the moving image to persuade, delude, convince and finally overcome all opposition. That the message was a lie was irrelevant.

Like politicians and lawyers, he was a man of words, convinced there was no problem that words could not resolve. The idea that any day might come when the words ran out and ceased to convince; when other, better words might outmanoeuvre and trounce his own; when he and his leader might no longer be believed; such a day was unimaginable to Boris Kuznetsov.

Public relations, they had called it in America, the multi-billion-dollar industry that could make a talentless oaf a celebrity, a fool a sage and a base opportunist a statesman. Propaganda, they called it in Russia, but it was the same tool.

With this tool and with Litvinov's brilliant film-imagery and studio-editing he had helped trans-

questions, the set speech, the prepared address, the adoring rally.

'I do not hold press conferences,' he snapped.

'Sir, it is the only way to terminate these foul rumours. The media speculation is getting out of hand. I cannot control it any more. No-one could. It is feeding on itself.'

'I hate press conferences, Kuznetsov. You know that.'

'But you are so good with the press, Mr President. Reasoned, calm, persuasive. They will listen to you. You alone can denounce the lies and rumours.'

'What do the public opinion polls say?'

'National approval for yourself, sir, 45 per cent and falling. From 70 eight weeks ago. Zyuganov of the Socialist Union, 28 per cent and rising. Markov the Acting President for the Democratic Alliance, rising slightly. That excludes the undecided. I have to say, sir, the past two days could cost another 10 per cent, maybe more, when the effect filters into the ratings.'

'Why should I hold a press conference?'

'It's national coverage, Mr President. Every major TV station will hang on each word you speak. You know when you speak, no-one can resist.'

Finally Igor Komarov nodded. 'Arrange it. I will create my address.'

The conference was held in the great banquet hall of the Metropol Hotel at eleven the next morning. Kuznetsov began by welcoming the national and foreign press and lost no time in pointing out that certain allegations of unspeakable foulness had been made over the previous two days concerning the policies and activities of the Union of Patriotic Forces. It was his privilege, in offering a complete and convincing rebuttal to these ignoble smears to welcome to the podium 'the next President of Russia, Igor Viktorovich Komarov'.

The UPF leader strode from between the curtains at the rear of the stage and walked to the lectern. He began as he always began, when speaking to rallies of the faithful, by talking about the Great Russia he intended

to create once the people had honoured him with the presidency. After five minutes he became disconcerted by the silence. Where was the responsive spark? Where was the applause? Where were the cheerleaders?

He raised his eyes to some distant clouds and evoked the glorious history of his nation, now in the grip of foreign bankers, profiteers and criminals. His peroration resounded through the hall, but the hall did not rise to its feet, right hands upraised in the UPF salute. When he stopped the silence continued.

'Perhaps there are questions?' suggested Kuznetsov. A mistake. At least a third of the audience comprised the foreign press. The *New York Times* man spoke fluent Russian, as did those from the *London Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Washington Post*, CNN and the rest.

'Mr Komarov,' called out the *Los Angeles Times* correspondent, 'I figure you have spent some 200 million dollars on your campaign so far. That has to be a world record. Where has the money come from?'

Komarov glared at him. Kuznetsov whispered in his ear 'Public subscriptions from the great people of Russia,' he said.

'That's about a year's salary from every man in Russia, sir. Where does it really come from?'

Others joined in.

'Is it true you intend to abolish all opposition parties and establish a one-party dictatorship?'

'Do you know why General Nikolayev was murdered just three weeks after he denounced you?'

The questions kept coming.

'Do you deny the Black Guards were behind those assassination attempts two nights ago?'

The cameras and microphones of the State TV and the two commercial networks roamed the room picking up the questions from the impertinent foreigners and the stuttered answers.

The man from the *Daily Telegraph*, whose colleague Mark Jefferson had been gunned down the previous July, had also received an anonymous telephone call.

He rose and the cameras zeroed in on him.

'Mr Komarov, have you ever heard of a secret document called the Black Manifesto?'

There was a stunned silence. Neither the Russian media nor the foreigners knew what he was talking about. In reality, neither did he. Igor Komarov, clinging to the lectern and the remains of his self-control, went white.

'What manifesto?'

Another mistake.

'According to my information, sir, it purports to contain your plans for the creation of a single-party state, the reactivation of the Gulag for your political opponents, rule of the country by 200,000 Black Guards and the invasion of the neighbouring republics.'

The silence was deafening. Forty correspondents in the hall came from Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Georgia and Armenia. Half the Russian press supported the parties destined for abolition, with their hierarchs heading for the camps, accompanied by the press. If the Englishman was right. Everyone stared at Komarov. That was when the real tumult began.

Then he made the third mistake. He lost his temper. 'I will not stand here and listen to any more of this shit,' he screamed, and stalked from the stage, followed by the hapless Kuznetsov.

At the rear of the hall Colonel Grishin stood in the shadow of a hanging curtain and glared at the press with pure hatred. Not for long, he promised himself, not for long.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

In the south-western corner of the central zone of Moscow, in a bulge of land formed by a hairpin curve in the Moskva River, stands the medieval convent of Novodevichi, and in the shadow of its walls lies the great cemetery.

Twenty acres of land, shaded by pine, birch, willow and lime trees play host to 22,000 graves where lie the notables of Russia for two centuries.

The cemetery divides into eleven major gardens. Numbers one to four cover the nineteenth century, bounded by the walls of the convent on one side and the central dividing wall on the other.

Numbers five to eight lie between the dividing wall and the perimeter, beyond which the trucks roar down the Khamovnichesky Val. Here lie the great and the bad of the Communist era. Marshals, politicians, scientists, academics, writers and astronauts are to be found flanking the paths and alleys; tombstones of great simplicity running to self-adoring grandiosity.

Gagarin the astronaut, killed flying a prototype while the worse for vodka, is here, a few yards from the round-headed stone effigy of Nikita Khrushchev. Models of aeroplanes, rockets and guns testify to what these men did in life; other figures stare heroically into oblivion, chests planted in granite medals.

Down the central pathway there is a further wall, penetrated by a narrow entrance and leading to three smaller gardens, numbers nine, ten and eleven. With space at a premium there were hardly any plots left by the winter of 1999, but one had been reserved for General of the Army Nikolai Nikolayev, and here on 26 December his nephew Misha Andreyev buried his Uncle Kolya.

He tried to make it the way the old man had asked at

their last dinner together. There were twenty generals, including the Defence Minister, and one of the two Metropolitan bishops of Moscow officiated.

The full monty, the old warrior had asked, so the acolytes swung their censers and the aromatic smoke rose in clouds in the bitter air.

The headstone was in the form of a cross, carved in granite, but there was no effigy of the dead man, just his name and beneath it the words: Russkiy Soldat, a Russian soldier.

Major-General Andreyev pronounced the eulogy. He kept it short. Uncle Kolya might have wanted to go to his grave like a Christian at last, but he hated gushing words.

When he had done, and while the bishop intoned the parting words, he laid the three magenta ribbons and gold discs of the Hero of the USSR on the coffin. Eight of his own soldiers of the Tamanskaya Division had acted as pall bearers, and they then lowered the coffin into the ground. Andreyev stood back and saluted. Two ministers and the other eighteen generals did the same.

As they walked back down the central pathway to the entrance and the cortège of waiting cars and limousines, the Deputy Defence Minister, General Butov, put a hand on his shoulder.

'A dreadful thing,' he said, 'a terrible way to go.'

'One day,' said Andreyev, 'I will find them, and they will pay.'

Butov was clearly embarrassed. He was a political appointee, a desk-jockey who had never commanded combat troops.

'Yes, well, I'm sure the militia people are doing their best,' he said.

On the pavement the generals solemnly shook his hand, one by one, then climbed into their staff cars and hurried away. Major-General Andreyev found his own car and drove back to his base.

Five miles away, as the winter light faded in the mid-afternoon, a short priest in cassock and stovepipe hat scurried through the snow and ducked into the onion-domed church on Slavyansky Square. Five minutes later he was joined by Colonel Anatoli Grishin.

'You seemed perturbed,' said the colonel quietly.

'I am badly frightened,' said the priest.

'Don't be, Father Maxim. There have been reverses, but nothing I cannot take care of. Tell me, why did the Patriarch leave so suddenly?'

'I don't know. On the morning of the 21st he received a phone call from the Trinity-St Sergius Monastery. I knew nothing of it. The call was taken by his private secretary. The first thing I knew, I was told to pack a suitcase.'

'Why?'

'I found out later. The monastery had invited the preacher Father Gregor to preach the sermon. The Patriarch decided he would like to attend.'

'And thus give his personal authority to Gregor and his contemptible message,' snapped Grishin. 'Without saying a word. Just being there would be enough.'

'Anyway, I asked if I would be going too. The secretary said no; His Holiness would take one of the Cossacks as his driver and his secretary. The two nuns were given the days off to visit relatives.'

'You did not inform me, Father.'

'How could I know anyone was coming that night?' asked the priest plaintively.

'Go on.'

'Well, I had to call the militia afterwards. The body of the Cossack guard was lying on the upper landing. In the morning I called the monastery and spoke to the secretary. I said there had been armed burglars and a shooting, nothing else. But later the militia changed that. They said the attack had been intended for His Holiness.'

'And then?'

'The secretary called me back. He said His Holiness

was deeply upset. Shattered was the word he used, and mainly by the murder of the Cossack guard. Anyway, he stayed on at the monastery and came back yesterday. His principal reason was to officiate at the funeral of the Cossack before the body was returned to his relatives on the Don.'

'So he is back. You called me here to tell me that?'

'Of course not. It is about the election.'

'You have no need to worry about the election, Father Maxim. Despite the damage, the Acting President will certainly be eliminated at the first round. In the run-off, Igor Komarov will still triumph over the Communist Zyuganov.'

'That's the point, Colonel. This morning His Holiness went to Staraya Ploshchad for a private meeting with the Acting President, at his own request. It seems there were two generals of the militia present, and others.'

'How do you know?'

'He came back in time for lunch. He took it in his study, alone apart from his private secretary. I was serving; they took no notice of me. They were discussing the decision that Ivan Markov had finally made.'

'And that was?'

Father Maxim Klimovsky was shaking like a leaf. The flame of the candle in his hands fluttered so that its soft light danced across the face of the Mother of God and Child on the wall.

'Calm yourself, Father.'

'I cannot. Colonel, you must understand my position. I have done all I could to help you, because I believe in Komarov's vision of the New Russia. But I cannot go on. The attack on the residence, the meeting of today . . . it is all becoming too dangerous.'

He winced as a steely hand gripped his upper arm.

'You are too far involved to pull out now, Father Maxim. You have nowhere else to go. On the one hand you go back to being a waiter at tables, despite the cassock and the holy orders. On the other you await the

phial was no larger than the top joint of his little finger. At half past nine Magomed and his two other bodyguards drove him to the address he gave them. It was a humble dwelling, a detached cottage or *izba*, far in the south-eastern suburbs of Moscow in the district of Nagatino.

The old man who answered the door was unshaven, a wool jumper wrapped around his thin body. There was no reason for Monk to know that once he had been a revered professor at Moscow University until he had broken with the Communist regime and published a paper for his students that called for democratic government.

That had been long before the reforms. Rehabilitation had come later, too late to matter, and a small State pension with it. At the time, he had been lucky to escape the camps. They had taken his job, of course, and his apartment. He had been reduced to sweeping the streets.

That was how it was done under the Communists. If the sinner escaped the camps for anti-Soviet activities, the authorities simply removed all the life-support systems. Well, Czech Premier Alexander Dubcek had been made to chop logs.

If he survived at all, it was due to a man of his own age who had stood beside him one day in the street, talking in reasonable but English-accented Russian. He never knew Nigel Irvine's name; he just called him *lisa*, the fox. Nothing much, really, said the spy from the embassy. Just a helping hand now and again. Small things, little risk. He had suggested the hobby the Russian professor should adopt, and the hundred-dollar bills had kept body and soul together.

That winter's night twenty years later he stared at the younger man in the door and said, *Da?*

'I have a tidbit for the Fox,' said Monk.

The old man nodded and held out his hand. Monk put the tiny phial into the palm; the man stepped backward and closed the door. Monk turned and walked back to the car.

At midnight little Martti, with the phial strapped to one of his legs, was released. He had been brought to Moscow weeks earlier by Mitch and Ciaran on their long drive from Finland, and delivered by Brian Vincent who could read Russian street maps and find the obscure dwelling.

Martti stood on his ledge for a moment, then spread his wings and rose in spirals high into the freezing night above Moscow. He rose to a thousand feet, where the cold would have reduced a human being to a frostbitten hulk.

By chance one of the InTelCor satellites was beginning its track across the frozen steppes of Russia. True to its instructions, it began to beam its 'Are you there, Baby?' ciphered message downwards to the city, unaware that it had previously destroyed its electronic child.

Outside the capital, the listeners of the FAPSI network scanned their computers for the telltale blip that would mean the foreign agent sought by Colonel Grishin had transmitted, so the triangulators could fix the source of the transmission to a single building.

The satellite drifted away and there was no blip.

Somewhere in his tiny head a magnetic impulse told Martti that his home, the place where three years earlier the cock-bird had hatched as a blind and helpless chick, was to the north. To the north he turned, into the bitter wind, hour after hour through the cold and dark, pulled only by the desire to go home where he belonged.

No-one saw him. No-one saw him leave the city or cross the coast with the lights of St Petersburg to his right. He just flew on and on with his message and his yearning to go home. Sixteen hours after leaving Moscow, chilled and exhausted, he fluttered into a loft on the outskirts of Helsinki. Warm hands took the message off his leg and three hours later Sir Nigel Irvine was reading it in London.

He smiled as he saw the text. It had gone as far as it could go. There was one last task for Jason Monk and

then he should go to ground again until he could safely pull out. But even Irvine could not predict quite what the maverick Virginian had in mind.

While Martti flew unseen over their heads, Igor Komarov and Anatoli Grishin sat in conference in the party leader's office. The rest of the small mansion that formed his headquarters was deserted except for the guards in their room on the ground floor. Outside in the darkness the killer dogs ran free.

Komarov sat behind his desk, ashen pale in the lamplight. Grishin had just finished speaking, reporting to the leader of the Union of Patriotic Forces the news he had learned from the renegade priest.

As he spoke, Komarov had seemed to shrink. The former icy control seeped away, the unhesitating decisiveness appeared to bleed out of him. Grishin knew the phenomenon.

It happened to the most fearsome dictators when suddenly stripped of their power. In 1944 Mussolini, the strutting Duce, had become overnight a shabby, frightened little man on the run.

Business tycoons, when the banks foreclosed, the jet was confiscated, the limousines impounded, the credit cards withdrawn, the senior staff quit and the house of cards came tumbling down, actually diminished in size and the old incisiveness became empty bluster.

Grishin knew, because he had seen generals and ministers huddled and fearful in his cells, once-powerful masters of the Apparatus, reduced to waiting for the Party's pitiless judgement.

Things were falling apart, the days of words were over. His own hour had come. He had always despised Kuznetsov, spinning his world of words and images, pretending that power came from an official communiqué. Power came from the barrel of a gun in Russia; always had and always would. Ironically, it had taken the man he hated most in all the world, the American scarlet pimpinel, to bring about the present situation, with a

UPF President who seemed to have been almost ready to follow Grishin's advice.

For Anatoli Grishin had no intention of accepting defeat to the militia of Acting President Yury Izrael. He could not dispense with Igor Komarov, but he could save his neck and then rise to undreamed-of office.

Inside his own world Igor Komarov himself was like Richard II mauling over the catastrophe that had overtaken him in such a short time. He literally could not understand the transformation, though he could just perceive how, step by step, it had come about.

At the start of November it had seemed that nothing on earth could prevent him winning the January election. His political organization was twice as efficient as any in the country; his oratory mesmerized the masses. Opinion polls showed he would receive 70 per cent of the national vote, enough for a clear win in the first round.

His political opponents had been in disarray, either withdrawing from the contest as their funds ran out or in despair at the size of his polling lead. Those seeking prefigment and favour after his certain victory had flocked to fawn upon him. By November his political triumph had seemed a certainty.

The theft of the Black Manifesto had been deeply disturbing at the time, but when nothing happened from mid-July onwards he had been reassured. The guilty parties had been punished, the too-smart foreign journalist silenced. Then there had been nothing for months. In Russia the march to the pinnacle had continued.

That a single foreign agent, whose face he had been shown in a photograph, could do him serious damage he had simply not believed. The destruction of his presses and the silencing of his magazine and newspaper had been infuriating but not vital. Sabotage and violence were integral parts of Russian life, but hitherto they had always been administered by Colonel Grishin on his orders. It was the shut-down of his televised broadcasts that had proved the starter-gun to what later enraged but bewildered him.

He despised the Church and all priests, so he had never been able to take seriously the idea that the Patriarch would be taken up by the organs of State with his crazy notion of restoring the monarchy. Nor could he believe that Alexei II could have any real influence with the people of Russia.

Did they, the people, not rise to *him*? Was it not to him that they looked for salvation, for a new discipline, for the cleansing of their Russian land? What need did they have of God when they had Igor Viktorovich Komarov?

He could understand why the Jew Bernstein had turned against him. If the interfering American had shown him the manifesto, he might have reacted the way he did. But why the general? Why had Nikolai Nikolayev denounced him? Had he not understood what a glorious future was in prospect for the Russian Army? Was the hero of Kursk and Bagration really worried about a few Jews and Chechens?

It had been the double blow of that interview in *Izvestia* and the close-down of his broadcasts that had finally caused him to realize the strength and breadth of the alliance someone had formed against him.

Then the Dolgoruki mafia, enraged by the raids on their premises; then the press. They were all destined for suppression, anyway. Church, mafia, free press, Jews, Chechens, foreigners – they would all pay in their turn.

‘It was a mistake to try those four attempts at assassinating our enemies,’ he said finally.

‘With respect, Mr President, it was tactically sound. Only the foulest luck decreed that three should not be in residence at the time.’

Komarov grunted. Bad luck it might be, but the reaction had been worse. Where did the press get the idea he might have been behind it? Who leaked? The media had always hung upon his every word; now they were abusing him. The press conference had been a disaster. Those foreigners, shouting impudent questions. He had never been subjected to such insolence. Kuznetsov had seen to that. He had been treated with respect at private

interviews, his views listened to attentively, heads nodding in agreement. Then the young fool had proposed the press conference . . .

'Are you sure of your source, Colonel?'

'Yes, Mr President.'

'You trust him?'

'Certainly not. I trust his appetites. He is venal and corrupt, but he lusts after preferment and the life of a voluptuary, both of which he has been promised. He revealed both visits to the Patriarch by the English spy, and both by the American agent. You read the transcript of the tape-recording of the second meeting with Monk, the threats on which I based the decision to silence the opposition permanently.'

'But this time . . . would they really have the nerve to strike at us?'

'I do not believe we can discount it. In boxing terms, the gloves are off. Our fool of an Acting President knows he cannot win against you, but might against Zyuganov. The generals heading the militia realize just in time what kind of a purge you have in mind for them. Using the allegations of a financial link between the UPF and the mafia, they could cook up charges. Yes, I think they might try.'

'If you were they, as a planner, what would you do, Colonel?'

'Exactly the same. When I heard the priest say what the Patriarch discussed while he waited at table, I thought it could not be true. But the more I think it over, the more sense it makes. Dawn of January first is a brilliant time. Who is not hung over from the previous night? What guards are awake? Who can react with speed and decisiveness? Most Russians on New Year's morning cannot even see straight – unless they are kept in barracks without a drop of vodka. Yes, it makes sense.'

'What are you saying? That we are finished? That all we have done was for nothing, that the great vision will never happen, because of a panicky and ambitious

If Grishin had been required to organize an armed force to capture the city of Moscow, and to do so starting from scratch in four days, he would never have been able to do it.

But he was not starting from scratch. He had for months known that in the immediate aftermath of Igor Komarov's presidential victory the programme for the transfer of all State powers to the UPF would begin.

The political side, the formal abolition of opposition parties, would be for Komarov. His own task would be the subjugation or disarming and disbanding of all the State's armed units.

In preparing for this task, he had already decided which would be his natural allies and which his obvious enemies. Chief among the latter were the Presidential Security Guard, a force of 30,000 armed men, of which 6,000 were based inside Moscow and 1,000 in the Kremlin itself.

Commanded by General Sergei Korin, successor to Yeltsin's notorious Alexander Korzhakov, they were all officered by nominees of the late President Cherkassov. They would fight for the legitimacy of the State and against the putsch.

After them came the Interior Ministry with its own army of 150,000 men. Fortunately for Grishin, most of this enormous force was scattered the length and breadth of Russia, with only 5,000 in and round the capital. The generals of the Presidium of the MVD would not be long working out that they would be among the first on the cattle-trucks for the Gulag, aware like the Presidentials that there could be no room in the New Russia for them and the Black Guards of Grishin.

Third in line, and a non-negotiable demand from the Dolgoruki mafia, was the arrest and internment of the two gang-buster divisions, the Federal unit, ruled from the MVD's national headquarters at Zhitny Square, and the Moscow City unit, the GUVD, run by General Petrovsky from Shabolovka Street. Both divisions and their Rapid Reaction Forces, the OMON and

supplies venture into the freezing night.

Everyone celebrates, including the unfortunate night-watchmen and skeleton staffs forbidden to take time off and go home. They bring their own supplies to work.

By six, Grishin calculated, he would have the streets to himself. By six every major ministry and government building would be empty apart from the night staff and by ten even they and the soldiers still in barracks would be unable to defend themselves.

A first priority, once his attacking forces were inside the city, was to seal Moscow from the outside. This was the job he allocated to the Young Combatants. There were fifty-two major and secondary roads into Moscow, and to block them all he needed 104 heavy trucks, loaded with concrete ballast.

He divided the Young Combatants into the 104 necessary groups, each under the command of an experienced soldier from the Black Guards. The trucks would be acquired by renting from long-distance hauliers or stealing at gunpoint on the morning of New Year's Eve. At the given hour each pair would be driven into position, moving out from intersections until they were nose-to-nose across every highway, then immobilized.

On every major road into Moscow the border between the Moscow Oblast and the neighbouring province is marked by an MVD militia post, a small booth with several bored squaddies and a phone, and a parked armoured personnel carrier. On New Year's Eve the APC would not be manned as the crew would be celebrating in the hut. In the case of the single highway that Grishin needed to enter the city, this post would be 'taken out'. In the case of all the others, the Young Combatants would park their blocking trucks across the road at the next intersection inside the city and leave the militiamen to get drunk as usual. Then the Combatants, about 200 per group, would mount their ambushes city-side of the trucks and prevent any relief column from entering Moscow.

Inside the city he needed to take seven targets, five secondary and two primary. As his Black Guards were quartered in five bases out in the countryside, with only one small barracks inside the city to supply guards for Komarov's house, the easiest way would be to drive in on five axes. But to achieve co-ordination that would mean a storm of radio traffic. He preferred to bring in his whole force in radio silence. He therefore favoured one single truck convoy.

As his main and headquarters base was to the north-east, he decided to bring the entire force of 6,000 men, fully armed and in their vehicles, to that base on 30 December, and invade the city down the main highway which starts as Yaroslavskoye Chaussee and becomes Prospekt Mira (Peace Avenue) as it nears the inner ring road.

One of his two primary targets, the great television complex at Ostankino, would lie only a quarter of a mile off that highway and for this he intended to detach 2,000 of his 6,000 men.

With the remaining 4,000, commanded by himself, he would drive on south, past the Olympic stadium, across the ring road and into the heart of inner Moscow for the greatest prize of all, the Kremlin itself.

Though 'Kreml' simply means 'fortress', and every ancient city in Russia has its fortress at the heart of what was once the walled town, the Kremlin of Moscow has long been symbolic of supreme power in Russia and the visible possession of that power. The Kremlin had to be his by dawn, its garrison subdued and its radio room unable to call for help, or the pendulum could swing the other way.

His five secondary targets he intended to delegate to the four armed forces he believed he could lock into an alliance, even in the short time left to him.

These targets were the Mayor's office on Tverskaya Street, which had a communications room from which appeals could be sent for help; the Interior Ministry on Zhitny Square with its communications network to the

MVD's private army scattered across Russia, and the attached OMON barracks next door; the complex of presidential and ministerial buildings on and around Staraya Ploshchad; the Khodinka airfield with its GRU barracks, a perfect dropping zone for paratroops if they were called to help the State; and the Parliament building, the Duma.

In 1993 when Boris Yeltsin had turned the guns of his tanks on the Duma to force the rebellious congressmen to come out with their hands up, the building had sustained considerable damage. For four years the Duma had been transferred to the old Gosplan economic offices on Manege Square, but with the damage repaired the Russian Parliament had gone back to the White House on the river at the end of Novy Arbat.

The Mayor's office, Duma and the ministries at Staraya Ploshchad would all be empty shells on New Year's Eve and, with the doors torn down by explosive charges, occupation would be simple enough. Fighting might erupt around the OMON barracks and the Khodinka base if the anti-gang troops or the handful of paratroopers and army intelligence officers at the old airfield fought back. These two targets he would give to the special forces units he intended to buy.

An eighth and obvious target in any putsch would be the Defence Ministry. This huge grey stone block at Arbatsky Square would also be thinly staffed, but at its heart was the communications headquarters that could speak instantly to any army, navy or air force base in Russia. He assigned no troops to storming the place, for he had special plans for the Defence Ministry.

Natural allies for any extreme right-wing putsch in Russia were not all that hard to find. Foremost among them was the Federal Security Service or FSB. This was the inheritor of his own once all-powerful Second Chief Directorate, KGB, the vast organization that kept repression in the USSR at the levels demanded by the Politburo. Since the arrival of the despised theory called democracy, its old powers had waned.

The FSB, headquartered at the famous KGB Centre on Dzerzhinsky Square, now renamed Lubyanka Square, and with the equally famous and feared Lubyanka jail behind it, was still in charge of counter-espionage and also contained a division devoted to combating organized crime. But the latter was not half as effective as General Petrovsky's GUVK and had thus not generated the insistent demands for revenge from the Dolgoruki mafia.

To assist in its labours, FSB commanded two forces of rapid reaction troops, the Alpha Group and the Vypel, Russian for 'banner'.

These two had once been the two most élite and feared of special forces units in Russia, sometimes being optimistically compared to the British SAS. What had gone wrong was a question of loyalty.

In 1991 the Defence Minister Yazov and the Chairman of the KGB Kryuchkov had mounted a coup against Gorbachev. The coup failed, though it brought Gorbachev down and Yeltsin to pre-eminence. Originally the Alpha Group had been part of the coup; halfway through they changed their minds, allowing Boris Yeltsin to emerge from the Duma, leap onto a tank and become a hero before the world. By the time a traumatized Gorbachev had been released from house-detention in the Crimea and flown back to Moscow to find his old enemy Yeltsin in charge, question marks about the Alpha Group were hovering in the air. The same applied to Vypel.

By 1999 both groups, heavily armed and hard fighters, were still discredited. But for Grishin they had two advantages. Like many special forces, they had a preponderance of officers and NCOs and few greenhorn privates. The veterans tended, politically, to the extreme right: anti-Semitic, anti-ethnic-minority and anti-democracy. Secondly, they had not been paid for six months.

Grishin's courtship was like a siren's song. A restoration of the old powers of the KGB, the pampered

treatment due to a true élite, and double salaries, starting now.

On the night of New Year's Eve, the Vympel troops were assigned to arm up, leave barracks, proceed to the Khodinka airfield and army base and secure both. Alpha Group was given the Interior Ministry and the adjoining OMON barracks, with a detached company taking the SOBR barracks behind Shabolovka Street.

On 29 December Colonel Grishin attended a meeting at the sumptuous country house outside Moscow maintained by the Dolgoruki mafia. Here he met and addressed the Skhod, the supreme council governing the gang. For him it was a crucial conference.

So far as the mafia was concerned, he had a deal of explaining to do. The raids conducted by General Petrovsky still stung. As pay-masters they demanded an explanation.

As Grishin spoke, the mood changed. When he revealed that there had been a plan to declare Igor Komarov an unfit person to participate in the forthcoming elections, alarm took over from aggression. They all had a major stake in his electoral success.

The body blow was Grishin's revelation that this idea had now been superseded; the State intended to arrest Komarov and crush the Black Guards. Within an hour it was the mafiosi who were seeking advice. When he announced his intended solution, they were stunned. Gangsterism, fraud, black market, extortion, narcotics, prostitution and murder were their speciality, but a *coup d'état* was high stakes indeed.

'It is only the biggest theft of all, the theft of the Republic,' said Grishin. 'Deny it, and you go back to being hunted by MVD, FSB, all of them. Accept it, and the land is ours.'

He used the word *zemlya*, which means the land, the country, the earth and all that therein is.

At the head of the table the senior of them all, an old *vor v zakone*, a 'thief-by-law', who had been born into the underworld like his father and all his clan, and who

among the Dolgoruki was the nearest thing to the Sicilian Don-of-Dons, stared at Grishin for a long while. The others waited. Then the gangster began to nod, his wrinkled cranium rising and falling like an old lizard signalling assent. The last funds were agreed.

So also was the third armed force Grishin needed. Two hundred of the eight hundred private 'security' firms in Moscow were Dolgoruki fronts. They would provide 2,000 men, all fully armed ex-soldiers or KGB hoods, 800 to storm, take and hold the empty White House, home of the Duma, and 1,200 for the Presidential office and attendant ministries, also empty on New Year's Eve, grouped on Staraya Ploshchad.

On the same day Jason Monk called General Petrovsky. He was still living at the SOBR barracks.

'Yes?'

'It's me again. What are you doing?'

'What's that to you?'

'Are you packing?'

'How did you know?'

'All Russians want to spend New Year's Eve with their families.'

'Look, my plane leaves in an hour.'

'I think you should cancel it. There will be other New Year's Eves.'

'What are you talking about, American?'

'Have you seen the morning papers?'

'Some. Why?'

'The latest opinion ratings. The ones taking account of the press revelations about the UPF and Komarov's press conference the other day. They show him at 40 per cent and dropping.'

'So, he loses the election. We get Zyuganov, the neo-Communist instead. What am I supposed to do about it?'

'Do you think Komarov will accept that? I told you once, he's not sane.'

'He's going to have to accept it. If he loses in a

tonight, he's lost. That's it.'

'That same night, you told me something.'

'What?'

'You said, if the Russian State is attacked, the State will defend itself.'

'What the hell do you know that I don't?'

'I don't *know* anything. I suspect. Didn't you know suspicion is the Russian speciality?'

Petrovsky stared at the mouthpiece and then at his half-packed suitcase lying on the narrow bunk of the barracks room.

'He wouldn't dare,' he said flatly. 'No-one would dare.'

'Yazov and Kryuchkov did.'

'That was 1991. Different.'

'Only because they made a mess of it. Why not stay in town over the holiday? Just in case.'

General Petrovsky put the phone down and began to unpack.

Grishin clinched his last alliance at a meeting in a beer bar on 30 December. His interlocutor was a beer-bellied cretin but the nearest thing to the commander of the street gangs of the New Russia Movement.

Despite its portentous name, the NRM was little more than a loose grouping of tattooed, shaven-headed thugs of the ultra-right who got their income and pleasure respectively by mugging and Jew-baiting, both, as they were wont to scream at passers-by, in the name of Russia.

The block of dollars Grishin had produced lay on the table between them and the NRM man eyed it eagerly.

'I can get 500 good lads any time I want,' he said. 'What's the job?'

'I'll give you five of my own Black Guards. You accept their combat orders or the deal's off.'

Combat orders sounded good. Sort of military. The NRM prided themselves on being soldiers of the New Russia, though they had never amalgamated with the UPF. The discipline was not to their liking.

'What's the target?'

'New Year's Eve, between ten and midnight. Storm, take and hold the Mayor's office. And there's a rule. No booze till dawn.'

The NRM commander thought it over. Dense he may have been, but he could work out the UPF was going for the big one. About time too. He leaned across the table, his hand closing on the brick of dollars.

'When it's over, we get the kikes.'

Grishin smiled. 'My personal gift.'

'Done.'

They fixed details for the NRM to rendezvous in the gardens of Pushkin Square, 300 yards up the road from the mansion that housed the government of the City of Moscow. It would not look out of keeping. The square was opposite McDonald's.

In due course, mused Grishin as he was driven away, the Jews of Moscow would indeed be taken care of, but so would the scum of the NRM. It would be amusing to put them in the same trains heading east, all the way to Vorkhuta.

On the morning of the 31st Jason Monk called General Petrovsky again. He was in his office at the already half-staffed GUV D headquarters in Shabolovka Street.

'Still at your post?'

'Yes, damn you.'

'Does the GUV D run to a helicopter?'

'Of course.'

'Can it fly in this weather?'

Petrovsky peered out the barred window at the low, lead-grey clouds.

'Not up into that lot. But below it, I suppose.'

'Do you know the locations of the camps of Grishin's Black Guards around this city?'

'No, but I can find out. Why?'

'Why don't you take a flight over all of them?'

'Why should I?'

'Well, if they are peace-loving citizens, all the barracks

lights should be on, with everyone inside in the warm, having a noggin before lunch and preparing for an evening of harmless festivities. Take a look. I'll call you back in four hours.'

When the call-back came, Petrovsky was subdued.

'Four of them appear closed down. His personal camp, north-east of here, is alive like an anthill. Hundreds of trucks being serviced. He seems to have moved the whole force to the one camp.'

'Why would he do that, General?'

'You tell me.'

'I don't know. But I don't like it. It smacks of a nocturnal exercise.'

'On New Year's Eve? Don't be crazy. Every Russian gets drunk on New Year's Eve.'

'My point exactly. Every soldier in Moscow will be plastered by midnight. Unless they are ordered to stay sober. Not a popular order, but as I said, there will be other New Year's Eves. Do you know the CO of the OMON regiment?'

'Of course. General Kozlovsky.'

'And the commander of the Presidential Security Guard?'

'Yes, General Korin.'

'Both now with their families?'

'I suppose so.'

'Look, man to man, if the worst should happen, if Komarov should win after all, what will happen to you, your wife and Tatiana? Worth a night of vigil? Worth a few phone calls?'

When he had put the phone down Jason Monk took up a map of Moscow and the surrounding countryside. His fingers roved over the area north-east of the capital. That was where Petrovsky had said the main UPF and Black Guards base was to be found.

From the north-east the main highway was the Yaroslavskoye Chaussee, becoming Prospekt Mira. It was the principal artery and it ran past the Ostankino television complex. Then he rang again.

'Umar, my friend. I need a last favour from you. I swear it's the last. A car with a phone and your number through the night . . . No, I don't need Magomed and the guys. It would spoil their New Year's Eve party. Just the car and the phone. Oh, and a handgun. If that wouldn't pose too much of a problem.'

He listened to the laugh down the phone.

'Any particular kind? Well, now . . .'

He thought back to Castle Forbes.

'You wouldn't be able to get hold of a Swiss Sig Sauer, would you?'

CHAPTER TWENTY

Two time zones to the west of Moscow, the weather was quite different, a bright blue sky and the temperature barely two below zero, as the Mechanic moved quietly through the woods towards the manor house.

His preparations for his journey across Europe had been as always meticulous and he had experienced no problems. He had preferred to drive. Guns and airliners seldom mixed, but a car had many hiding places.

Through Belarus and Poland his Moscow-registered Volvo had attracted no attention and his papers showed he was just a Russian businessman attending a conference in Germany. A search of his car would have revealed nothing further.

In Germany, where the Russian mafia was well established, he exchanged his Volvo for a German-registered Mercedes and easily acquired the hunting rifle with its hollow-point ammunition and scope-sight before pushing further west.

Under the new dispensation of the European Union the borders were virtually non-existent and he passed through in a column of other cars with a bored wave from a single customs officer.

He had acquired a large-scale road map of the area he sought, identified the nearest village to the target and then the manor house itself. Passing through the village he had simply followed the signs to the entrance of the short drive, noted the board that confirmed he had the right address, then driven on.

After spending most of the night in a motel fifty miles away, he had driven back before dawn but parked his car two miles away from the manor and walked the rest, through the woods, emerging at the edge of the woodland behind the house. As the weak wintry sun rose, he created a lying-up position at the foot of a big beech tree.

and settled to wait. From where he sat he could look down at the house and its courtyard from 300 yards while remaining out of sight behind the tree.

As the landscape came alive, a cock pheasant strutted to within a few yards of him, stared at him angrily and scurried away. Two grey squirrels played in the beech above his head.

At nine a man emerged into the courtyard. The Mechanic raised his binoculars and adjusted the focus slightly, until the figure looked to be fifty feet away. It was not his target; it was a manservant who fetched a basket of logs from a shed under the courtyard wall and went back inside.

On one side of the courtyard was a row of stables. Two of the loose-boxes were occupied. The heads of two large horses, a bay and a chestnut, peered over the tops of the half-doors. At ten they were rewarded when a girl came out and brought them fresh hay. Then she went back inside.

Just before midday an older man emerged, crossed the courtyard and patted the horses' muzzles. The Mechanic studied the face in his binoculars and glanced down at the photo in the frosty grass by his side. No mistake.

He raised the hunting rifle and peered through the sight. The tweed jacket filled the circle. The man was facing the horses, back to the hillside. Safety catch off. Hold steady, a slow squeeze.

The crack of the shot echoed across the valley. In the courtyard the man in tweed seemed to be pushed into the stable door. The hole in his back, at the level of the heart, was lost in the pattern of the tweed, and the exit wound was pressed against the white stable door. The knees buckled and the figure slid downwards, leaving a smear on the paint. A second shot took away half the head.

The Mechanic rose, slipped the rifle into its sheepskin-lined sleeve, slung it over his shoulder and began to jog. He moved fast, having memorized the way

he had come six hours before, the way back to his car.

Two shots on a winter's morning in the countryside would not be so odd. A farmer shooting rabbit or crow. Then someone would look out of the windows and run across the courtyard. There would be screams, disbelief, the attempts to revive; all a waste of time. Then the run back to the house, the phone call to the police, the garbled explanation, the ponderous official inquiries. Eventually a police car would come, eventually road blocks might be set up.

All too late. In fifteen minutes he was at his car, in twenty minutes moving. Thirty-five minutes after the shots he was on the nearest motorway, one car among hundreds. By that time the country policeman had taken a statement and was radioing the nearest city for detectives to be sent.

Sixty minutes after the shots the Mechanic had hefted the gun in its case over the parapet of the bridge he had selected earlier and watched it vanish in the black water. Then he began the long drive home.

The first headlights came just after seven, moving slowly through the dark towards the bright-lit complex of buildings that made up the Ostrankino TV centre. Jason Monk sat at the wheel of his car, the engine running to charge the heater against the cold.

He was parked just off the Boulevard Akademika Kōroleva, up a side road, with the principal office building straight ahead of his windscreen across the boulevard and the spire of the transmitting tower behind him. When he saw that this time the lights were not from a single car but from a column of trucks, he killed the engine and the tell-tale plume of exhaust died away.

There were about thirty trucks, but only three drove straight into the car park of the main building. It was a huge structure, the base five storeys high and 300 metres wide, with two main entrances; an upper superstructure 100 metres wide with eighteen storeys. Normally 8,000 people would work in it, but on New Year's Eve there

fewer than 500 to ensure the service continued through the night.

Armed men clad in black jumped out of the three parked lorries and ran straight into the two reception areas. Within seconds the frightened lobby staff were pressed up against the back wall, held at gunpoint, clearly visible from the outer darkness. Then Monk watched them ushered away out of sight.

Inside the main building, guided by a terrified porter, the point unit made straight for the switchboard room, surprising the operators while one of their number, a former Telekom technician, disconnected all lines in and out.

One of the Black Guards emerged and flashed a torch-light signal to the rest of the convoy which then rolled forward to fill the car park and surround the office block in a defensive ring. Hundreds more Guards poured out and jogged inside.

Though Monk could only see vague shapes in the windows of the upper floors, the Guards, according to their plan, were fanning out through floor after floor, removing all mobile phones from the terrified night staff and hurling them into canvas carry-alls.

To Monk's left there was a smaller and secondary building, also part of the TV complex, reserved for accountants, planners, executives, all at home celebrating. It was shuttered in darkness.

Monk reached to the car phone and dialled a number he knew by heart. 'Petrovsky.'

'It's me.'

'Where are you?'

'Sitting in a very cold car out at Ostankino.'

'Well, I'm in a reasonably warm barracks with a thousand and young men on the verge of mutiny.'

'Reassure them. I'm watching the Black Guards over the entire TV complex.'

There was silence.

'Don't be a bloody fool. You have to be wrong.'

'All right. So a thousand armed men in black,

in thirty trucks with dipped headlights, were supposed to invade Ostankino and hold the staff at gunpoint. That's what I'm watching from 200 metres away through my windscreen.'

'Jesus Christ. He's really doing it.'

'I told you he was mad. Maybe not so crazy. He might win. Is anybody in Moscow sober enough to defend the State tonight?'

'Give me your number, American, and get off the phone.'

Monk gave it to him. The forces of law and order would be too busy to start tracing moving cars.

'One last thing, General. They won't interrupt the scheduled programmes. Not yet. They'll let the recorded stuff go out as normal – until they're ready.'

'I can see that. I'm watching Channel One right now. It's the Cossack Dance Troupe.'

'A recorded show. They're all recorded until the main news. Now, I think you should get on the phone.'

But General Petrovsky had just disconnected. Although he did not then know it, his barracks would be under attack within sixty minutes.

It was too quiet. Whoever had planned the takeover of Ostankino had planned well. Up and down the boulevard there were blocks of apartments, mostly with lights lit, their inhabitants down to shirtsleeves, glasses in hand, watching the same TV that was being hijacked in silence barely yards away.

Monk had spent his time studying the road map of the Ostankino district. To emerge onto the main boulevard now would be asking for trouble. But behind him lay a network of back streets between housing projects that eventually led southwards to the centre of the city.

The logical way would have been to cut through to Prospekt Mira, the main road to the centre, but he suspected that highway, too, was no place tonight for Jason Monk.

Without putting on any lights, he hung a U-turn in the road, climbed out, crouched and emptied a magazine of

his automatic straight at the trucks and the TV building.

At 200 metres a handgun sounds like a fire-cracker; but the bullets carry that far. Three windows in the building shattered, a truck windscreen broke apart and a lucky shot caught a Black Guard in the ear. One of his companions lost his nerve and sprayed the night with his Kalashnikov assault rifle.

Because of the bitter cold, double-glazing is vital in Moscow; with that, and the television blaring, many residents still heard nothing. But the Kalashnikov shattered three apartment windows and panic-stricken heads began to appear. Several then disappeared to run for their telephones and call the police.

Black Guards were beginning to form up and head towards him. Monk slipped into his car and sped away. He put on no lights, but the Guards heard the roar of the engine and fired further bullets after him.

In the MVD headquarters at Zhitny Square the senior officer on duty was the Commander of the OMON regiment, General Ivan Kozlovsky, who was in his office in the barracks of his 3,000 sullen men whose leave he had earlier that day cancelled against his better judgement. The man who had persuaded him to do this, speaking from 400 metres away in Shabolovka Street, was on the phone again and Kozlovsky was shouting at him.

'Bloody rubbish. I'm watching the fucking TV right now. Well, who says? What do you mean, you have been informed? Hold on, hold on . . .'

His other phone was blinking. He snatched the receiver and shouted, 'Yes?'

A nervous telephonist came on the line. 'I'm sorry to trouble you, General, but you seem to be the most senior officer in the building. There's a man on the phone who says he lives at Ostankino and there is shooting in the streets. A bullet smashed his window.'

General Kozlovsky's tone changed. He spoke clearly and calmly.

'Get every detail from him and call me back.'

To the other phone he said: 'Valentin, you could be

light. A citizen just phoned that there is shooting out here. I'm going to red alert.'

'Me, too. By the way, I phoned General Korin earlier. He agreed to keep some Presidentials on stand-by.'

'Good thinking. I'll call him.'

Eight more calls came through from the Ostankino area concerning firing in the streets, then a more lucid call from an engineer living in a top-floor apartment across the boulevard from the TV centre. He was patched through to General Kozlovsky.

'I can see it all from here,' said the engineer, who like every Russian male had done his military service. 'About a thousand men, all armed, a convoy of over twenty trucks. Two APCs facing outwards from the car park in front. BTR 80As, I think.'

Thank God, thought Kozlovsky, for ex-military men. If he had any doubts, they were dispelled. The BTR 80A is an eight-wheeled armoured personnel carrier mounting a thirty-millimetre cannon and carrying a commander, driver, gunner and six-man dismount squad.

If the attackers were dressed in black, they were not army. His own OMON teams dressed in black, but they were downstairs. He called his own unit commanders down below.

'Truck up and move out,' he ordered. 'I want two thousand men out on the streets and a thousand to stay and defend this place.'

If any *coup d'état* was taking place, the attackers would have to neutralize the Interior Ministry and its barracks. Happily the latter was built like a fortress.

Outside, other troops were already on the move, but they were not commanded by Kozlovsky. The Alpha strike force was closing on the ministry.

Grishin's problem had been timing. Without breaking radio silence until the last minute, he needed to co-ordinate his attacks. To attack too early could mean the defenders were not well enough into their celebrations; too late and he would lose some of the hours of darkness.

He had ordered the Alpha Group to strike at nine.

At half past eight 2,000 OMON commandos left their barracks in trucks and APCs. As soon as they were gone the remainder sealed their fortress and took up defensive positions. At nine they came under fire but for the attackers all element of surprise was gone.

Counter-fire raked the streets round the ministry and ripped across Zhitny Square. The Alpha Group soldiers had to take cover and wish they had artillery. But they had none.

'American?'

'Here.'

'Where are you now?'

'Trying to stay alive. Heading south from the TV centre, avoiding Prospekt Mira.'

'There are troops on their way. A thousand of mine and two thousand OMONs.'

'May I make a suggestion?'

'If you must.'

'Ostankino is only part of it. If you were Grishin, what would you target?'

'MVD, Lubyanka.'

'MVD, yes. Lubyanka, no. I don't think he'll have any trouble from his old mates in the Second Chief Directorate.'

'You could be right. What else?'

'Surely, government headquarters at Staraya Ploshchad, and the Duma. For the appearance of legitimacy. And places where resistance might come from. You at the GUVd, the paratroopers at Khodinka airfield. And the Defence Ministry. But most of all the Kremlin. He must have the Kremlin.'

'That's defended. General Korin has been informed and he is on alert. We don't know how many Grishin has.'

'About thirty, maybe forty, thousand.'

'Christ, we have less than half.'

'But better quality. And he has lost 50 per cent.'

'Which 50 per cent?'

'The element of surprise. What about reinforcements?'

'General Korin will be on to the Defence people by now.'

Colonel-General Sergei Korin, commander of the Presidential Security Guard, had reached the barracks inside the Kremlin walls and barred the multi-defence Kutafya Gate behind him just before Grishin's main column entered Manege Square. Just past the Kutafya is the bigger Trinity Tower, and inside that, on the right, the barracks of the Presidential Guard. General Korin was in his office and on the phone to the Defence Ministry.

'Give me the senior officer on duty,' he shouted. There was a pause and a voice he knew came on the line.

'Deputy Defence Minister Butov here.'

'Thank God you're there. We have a crisis. There's some kind of a coup going on. Ostankino has gone. The MVD is under attack. There's a column of armoured cars and trucks outside the Kremlin. We need help.'

'You'll get it. What do you need?'

'Anything. What about the Dzerzhinsky?'

He referred to a Special Ops Mechanized Infantry Division, created specifically as an anti-coup *d'état* defence unit after the putsch of 1991.

'It's at Ryazan. I can have it rolling in an hour, with you in three.'

'As soon as possible. What about VDV's?'

He knew there was an élite parachute brigade barely an hour away by plane, which could drop onto Khodinka airfield if the drop-zone could be marked out for them.

'You'll get everything I can lay on for you, General. Just hang on.'

A team of Black Guards ran forward under covering fire from their own heavy machine-guns and reached the shelter of the covered Borovitsky Gate. A shaped charge of plastic explosive was placed on each of the four hinges. As the team ran back, two were cut down by fire from the tops of the walls. Seconds later the charges went off.

time no-one will interfere with you.'

An hour later 300 armed Chechens arrived in Tverskaya Street where the NRM gangs were rampaging through the seat of the government of the City of Moscow. Across the road the stone statue of Yuri Dolgoruki, founder of Moscow, sat astride his horse and stared with contempt. The door of the city hall was smashed and the entrance wide open.

The Chechens drew their long Caucasian knives, their pistols and mini-Uzis and went inside. Every man remembered the destruction of the Chechen capital of Grozny in 1995 and the rape of Chechnya over the two succeeding years. After the first ten minutes, it was no contest.

The Duma building, the White House, had fallen to the 'security' firm mercenaries with hardly a struggle, since it was occupied only by a few caretakers and night-watchmen. But at Staraya Ploshchad the thousand SOBR troops were in room to room and street to street combat with the rest of the men from the Dolgoruki gang's 200 'security' companies, and the heavier weapons of the Rapid Reaction Force and the anti-gang militia of Moscow City were a match for their opponents' greater numbers.

At Khodinka airfield the Vypel special forces troops were encountering unexpected resistance from the few paratroops and GRU intelligence officers who, warned just in time, had barricaded themselves inside.

Monk swung into Arbat Square and stopped in amazement. On the eastern side of the triangle the grey granite block of the Defence Ministry stood alone and silent. No Black Guards, no firefight, no sign of entry. Of all the installations a planner of a *coup d'état* in Moscow or any capital would have to possess, and quickly, the Defence Ministry would be high on the list. Five hundred yards away, down Znamenka Street and across Borovitsky Square, he could hear the crackle of gunfire as the battle for the Kremlin raged.

Why was the Defence Ministry not taken or under

siege? From the forest of aerials on its roof the messages must be screaming out across Russia to summon help from the army. He consulted his slim address book and punched a number into his car phone.

In his private quarters 200 yards inside the main gate at Kobyakova base, Major-General Misha Andreyev adjusted his tie and prepared to leave. He often wondered why he put on his uniform to preside over New Year's Eve in the Officers' Club. By morning it would be so badly stained that the whole thing would have to go to the cleaners. When it came to celebrating New Year's Eve, the tank men prided themselves on taking lessons from no-one.

The phone rang. It would be his Executive Officer urging him to hurry up, complaining that the lads wanted to get stuck in; first the vodka and the endless toasts, then the food and the champagne for the hour of midnight.

'Coming, coming,' he said to the empty room, and reached for the phone.

'General Andreyev?' He did not know the voice.

'Yes.'

'You don't know me. I was a friend, in a way, of your late uncle.'

'Indeed.'

'He was a good man.'

'I thought so.'

'He did what he could. Denouncing Komarov in that interview.'

'What are you getting at, whoever you are?'

'Igor Komarov has mounted a coup in Moscow. Tonight. Commanded by his dog, Colonel Grishin. The Black Guards are taking Moscow, and with it Russia.'

'OK, joke's gone on long enough. Get back to your vodka and get off this phone.'

'General, if you don't believe me, why not ring anyone you know in central Moscow?'

'Why should I?'

'There's a lot of shooting going on. Half the city can

hear it. One last thing. It was the Black Guards who killed Uncle Kolya. On the orders of Colonel Grishin.'

Misha Andreyev found himself staring at the phone and listening to the disconnected buzz. He was angry. Angry at the intrusion of his privacy on his private line, angry at the insult to his uncle. If anything grave were happening in Moscow, the Defence Ministry would immediately alert army units within a 100-kilometre radius of the capital.

The 200-acre base of Kobyakovo was just forty-six kilometres from the Kremlin; he knew because he had once checked it in his car. It was also the home of the unit he was proud to command, the Tamanskaya Division, the élite tank men known as the Taman Guards.

He put the phone back. It rang immediately.

'Come on, Misha, we're waiting to start.'

His Executive Officer from the club.

'Coming, Konni. Just a couple of phone calls to make.'

'Well, don't be long. Or we'll start without you.'

He dialled another number.

'Ministry of Defence,' said a voice.

'Get me the night duty officer.'

With considerable speed another voice came on the line.

'Who is that?'

'Major-General Andreyev, Commander Tamanskaya.'

'This is Deputy Defence Minister Butov.'

'Ah, yes, sorry to disturb you, sir. Is everything all right in Moscow?'

'Certainly. Why not?'

'No reason, Minister. I just heard something . . . odd. I could mobilize in—'

'Stay on your base, General. That is an order. All units are confined to base. Get back to the Officers' Club.'

'Yes, sir.'

He put the phone down again. Deputy Defence

want you ever to betray these men.

He reached down to the cradle, killed the line, then dialled two figures. His Executive Officer came on the line, backed by roars of laughter.

'Konni, I don't care how many T-80s are ready to roll, or how many BTRs, I want everything on this base that can move to be ready to go, and every soldier who can stand, fully armed in one hour.'

There was silence for several seconds.

'Boss, is that for real?' asked Konni

'It's for real, Konni. The Tamanskaya is going to Moscow.'

At one minute after midnight in the year of grace 2000 the first tracks of the first tank of the Taman Guards rolled out of Kobyakova base and turned towards the Minsk Highway and the gates of the Kremlin.

The narrow country road from the Highway to the base was only three kilometres, over which the column of twenty-six T-80 main battle tanks and forty-one BTR 80 armoured personnel carriers had to proceed in single file and at reduced speed.

Out on the main road, General Andreyev gave the order to occupy both carriageways and increase to maximum cruise speed. The clouds of the day had broken up into patches and between them the stars were bright and brittle. On either side of the roaring column of tanks the pine woods crackled in the cold.

It was forty-three kilometres to the Kremlin gates, and they were cruising at over sixty kilometres per hour. Somewhere up ahead a single driver approached; his lights picked up the mass of grey steel pounding towards him and he drove straight into the woods.

Ten kilometres out of Moscow the column came to the police post marking the border. Inside their steel hut, four militiamen peered above the windowsills, saw the column and crouched back down, holding each other and their vodka bottles as the hut shuddered from the vibrations.

Andreyev was in the leading tank and saw the blocking trucks first. A number of private cars had approached the road blocks during the night, waited a while then turned and headed back. There was no time for the column to halt.

'Fire at will,' said Andreyev.

His gunner squinted once and released a single round from the 125-mm cannon in the turret. At a range of 400 metres the shell was still at muzzle velocity when it hit the truck and blew it apart. Beside Andreyev's tank, his Executive Officer, occupying the other half of the dual carriageway, did the same and demolished the other truck. Just beyond the roadblock there was a smattering of small-arms fire from the ambush positions.

Inside the steel cupola on the roof of the turret Andreyev's machine-gunner raked his side of the road with his 12.7-mm heavy machine-gun and the firing stopped.

As the column thundered past, the Young Combatants stared in disbelief at the ruin of their road block and ambush site, then began to filter away into the night.

Six kilometres later Andreyev slowed his column to thirty kilo-metres per hour and ordered two diversions. He sent five tanks and ten APCs to the right to relieve the garrison being besieged in the barracks at Khodinka airfield, and on a hunch another five tanks and ten carriers to the left, to find their way north-east to secure the Ostankino television complex.

At the Garden Ring Road he ordered his remaining sixteen T-80s and twenty-one APCs to the right as far as Kudrinsky Square, then left towards the Defence Ministry.

The tanks were now in single file again and reduced speed to twenty kilometres per hour, their tracks chewing chunks out of the tarmac as they swung into line and headed towards the Kremlin.

In the basement communications room of the Defence Ministry, Deputy Defence Minister Butov

heard the rumble above his head and knew there was only one kind of creature in a city at war that can make that kind of thud.

The column pounded through Arbat Square and passed the ministry, pointing now straight towards Borovitsky Square and, on the other side, the walls of the Kremlin. None of the men in the tanks and APCs noticed a car, parked among others, just off the square, nor the figure in quilted jacket and boots who left the car and began to trot after them.

In the Rosy O'Grady pub, the Russian capital's Irish contingent was making sure the New Year had been well and truly celebrated, complete with the constant crackle of fireworks coming from the Kremlin down the street and across the square, when the first T-80 growled past the windows.

The Irish cultural attaché lifted his head from his Guinness, glanced out and remarked to the barman, 'Jaysus, Pat, was that a fucking tank?'

In front of the Borovitsky Gate was a parked BTR 80 armoured personnel carrier of the Black Guards, its cannon raking the walls on top of which the last of the Presidentials had retreated. For four hours they had fought their way through the grounds of the Kremlin, waiting for reinforcements, unaware that General Korin's remaining troops were ambushed on the outskirts of the city.

By one in the morning the Black Guards occupied everything but the tops of the walls, 2,235 metres of them and wide enough at the top to march five men abreast. Here the last few hundreds of the Presidential Guard were huddled, covering the narrow stone steps from below and denying Gribin's men the final conquest.

From the western side of Borovitsky Square Andreyev's lead tank emerged into the open and saw the BTR. Its point-blank range a single shell blew the carrier to bits. When the tanks ran over the wreckage, the fragments were hardly larger

than hub caps and their tracks flicked them aside.

At four minutes after one, General Andreyev's T-80 plunged down the tree-lined approach to the Tower and Gate, entered the arch with its shattered door and grille, and rolled into the Kremlin.

Like his uncle before him, he disdained to squat beneath a closed turret, peering through the periscope. His turret cover was thrown back and his head and torso were out in the cold, padded helmet and goggles masking his face.

One by one the T-80s rolled past the Great Palace and the pockmarked cathedrals of the Annunciation and the Archangel, pulling past the Tsar Bell into Ivanovsky Square, where once the city crier announced the tsar's decrees.

Two Black Guards carriers tried to take him on. Both were reduced to shards of hot metal.

Beside him the 7.62-mm light machine-gun and its heavier sister the 12.7 emitted a continuous chatter as the tank's searchlight began to pick up the running figures of the putschists.

There were still over 3,000 Black Guards combat-fit and investing the Kremlin's seventy-three acres, and it would have been pointless for Andreyev's dismount squads to have left their vehicles. Barely 200 of them would have made small difference on equal terms. But inside their armour, they were not on equal terms.

Grishin had not foreseen armour; he had brought no anti-tank gunnery. Lighter and nimbler, the Tamanskaya's APCs could penetrate the narrower alleys where the tanks could not go. Out in the open the tanks were waiting with their machine-guns, impervious to counter-fire.

But the real effect was psychological. To the soldier on foot, the tank is a true monster, its crew peering unseen through armoured glass, its machine-gun snouts wivelling to find more helpless targets.

In fifty minutes the Black Guards cracked, breaking over to run for the sanctuary of the churches, palaces

and cathedrals. Some made it; others were caught in the open by the cannon of the BTRs or the machine-guns of the tanks.

Elsewhere in the city the separate battles were at different stages. The Alpha Group was close to storming the OMON barracks at the Federal Interior Ministry when one of them caught a scream on his radio from the Kremlin. It was a panic-stricken Black Guard calling for help. But he made the mistake of mentioning the intervention of the T-80s. Word of the tanks flashed through the Alpha Group and they decided enough was enough. This had not gone as Grishin had promised them. He had pledged total surprise, superiority of firepower and a helpless enemy. None of these had happened. They pulled back and sought to save themselves.

At the City Hall the street gangs of the New Russia Movement had already been taken apart by the Chechens.

In Staraya Ploshchad, the OMON troops, supported by General Petrovsky's SOBR men, were beginning to flush the mercenaries from the Dolgoruki mafia's 'security' companies out of the Government Headquarters.

At Khodinka airfield the tide was turning. Five tanks and ten BTRs had taken the Vympel special forces troops in the flank, and the more lightly armed commandos were being pursued through the maze of hangars and warehouses that made up the base.

The Duma was still occupied by the remainder of the privateers from the 'security' firms, but they had nowhere to go and nothing to do but monitor by radio the news from elsewhere. They, too, heard the screams for help from the Kremlin, recognized the power of the tanks and began to quit, each man persuading himself that with luck he would never be identified.

Ostankino still belonged to Grishin, but the ~~announcement~~ announcement destined for the morning ~~was not to~~ hold as the 2,000 Black Guards, watching ~~from the~~ windows, saw the tanks move slowly ~~up the Boulevard~~ and their own trucks flaming one after another.

The Kremlin is built on a bluff above the river, the slopes of the bluff studded with trees and shrubs, many of them evergreen. Beneath the western wall lie the Alexandrovsky Gardens. Paths through both sets of trees lead towards the Borovitsky Gate. None of the fighters inside the walls saw the single moving figure coming through the trees towards the open gate, nor did they see him climb the last slope to the ramp and slip inside.

As he emerged from the arch the passing flashlight of one of Andreyev's tanks washed across him, but the crew mistook him for one of their own. His quilted jacket resembled their own padded jerkins and his round fur hat looked more like their own headgear than the black steel helmets of Grishin's Guards. Whoever was behind the flashlight presumed he was a tank man from a crippled APC seeking shelter under the arch.

The light flickered over him and went away. As it did so, Jason Monk left the arch and ran under the cover of the pine trees to the right of the gate. From the cover of his darkness he watched and waited.

There are nineteen perimeter towers to the Kremlin, but only three have usable gates. Tourists enter and leave by the Borovitsky or the Trinity gates, troops by the Spassky. Of the three, only one was wide open and he was beside it.

A man deciding to save himself would have to leave the walled enclosure. Come the dawn the forces of the State would flush out the defeated in hiding, pulling them from every last doorway and vestry, pantry and cupboard, even down to the secret rooms of the command post beneath the Spassky Gardens. Anyone wishing to stay alive and out of prison would deduce he should leave soon via the only open gate.

Across from where he stood Monk could see the door of the Armoury, treasure house of a thousand years of Russian history, hanging in splinters where the rear of a turning tank had crushed it. The flickering flames from a burning Black Guards personnel carrier cast a glow over the façade.

The tide of battle moved away from the gate towards the Senate and the Arsenal at the north-eastern sector of the fortress. The burning vehicle crackled.

Just after two he caught a movement by the wall of the Great Palace, then a man in black came running, doubled to keep low but moving fast by the façade of the Armoury. At the burning APC he paused to look back, checking for pursuit. A tyre caught fire and flamed, causing the fleeing man to turn quickly round. By the yellow light Monk saw the face. He had only seen it once before. In a photograph, on a beach at Sapodilla Bay in the Turks and Caicos Islands. He stepped from behind his tree.

'Grishin.'

The man looked up, peered into the gloom beneath the pines. Then he saw who had called. He was carrying a Kalashnikov, the folded-stock AK-74. Monk saw the barrel come up and stepped behind the fir. There was a chattering burst of fire. Chunks of living wood were torn from the trunk. Then it stopped.

Monk peered round the bole. Grishin had gone. There had been fifty yards between him and the gate, but only ten for Monk. He had not passed.

Just in time Monk saw the muzzle of the AK-74 jutting out of the broken doorway. He stepped back again as bullets tore the tree in front of him. The firing stopped again. Two halves of a magazine, he estimated, left the tree and ran across the road to flatten himself against the ochre wall of the museum. He had his Sig Sauer against his chest.

Again the barrel of the assault rifle came out of the doorway as the holder sought a target across the road. Unable to see anything, Grishin advanced another foot.

Monk's bullet hit the stock of the AK with enough force to tear it from the colonel's hands. It fell and skittered out onto the pavement, beyond reach. Monk heard running footsteps on the stone floor inside. Seconds later he had left the glow of the burning APC and was

crouched in the pitch darkness of the hallway of the Armoury.

The museum is on two floors, with nine great halls containing fifty-five showcases. In these are literally billions of dollars' worth of historic artefacts, for such was once the wealth and the power of Russia that everything possessed by the tsars, their crowns, thrones, weapons, clothes, right down to horse-bridles, were studded with silver, gold, diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires and pearls.

As his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, Monk could make out ahead of him the dim shape of the stairs to the upper floor. To his left was the vaulted arch leading to the four halls of the ground floor. From inside he heard a slight bump, as of someone nudging one of the showcases.

Taking a deep breath, Monk threw himself through the arch in a parachute roll, continuing to turn over and over in the darkness until he came up against a wall. As he came through the doorway he half-glimpsed the blue-white flash of muzzle-flame and was covered in fragments of glass as a case above his head took the bullet.

The hall was long and narrow, though he could not see it, with long glass cases along both sides and a single display area, also enclosed in glass, in the centre. Inside these, waiting again for the bright electric lights and the gawping tourists were the priceless coronation robes, Russian, Turkish and Persian, of all the Rurik princes and Romanov tsars. A few square inches of any of them, and the jewels stitched to them, would keep a working man for years.

As the last shard of glass tinkled down, Monk strained his ears and heard at length a gasp as someone trying not to pant let out their breath. Taking a triangle of broken plate glass, he lobbed it through the blackness towards the sound.

Glass landed on glass case, there was another wild shot and the sound of running feet between the echoes

of the detonation. Monk rose to a crouch and ran forward, sheltering behind the centre display until he realized Grishin had retreated into the next hall and was waiting for him.

Monk advanced to the communicating arch, a second slice of glass in his hand. When he was ready he tossed it far down the hall, then stepped through the arch and immediately sideways behind a cabinet. This time there was no bullet.

With his night-vision returned, he realized he was in a smaller hall containing jewel- and ivory-studded thrones. Though he did not know it, the coronation throne of Ivan the Terrible was a few feet to his left and that of Boris Godunov just beyond it.

The man ahead of him had clearly been running, for while Monk's breathing after his rest in the trees was measured and even, he could hear somewhere up ahead of him the rasp of the air entering Grishin's lungs.

Reaching up, he tapped the barrel of his automatic high on the glass above him, then pulled his hand down. He saw the flash of a gun-muzzle in the darkness and fired quickly back. Above his head more glass broke and Grishin's bullet clipped a shower of brilliants off the diamond throne of Tsar Alexei.

Monk's bullet must have been close, for Grishin turned and ran into the next hall which, though Monk did not know it and Grishin must have forgotten, was the last, a cul-de-sac, the hall of the antique carriages.

Hearing the scuttle of feet ahead of him, Monk followed fast, before Grishin could find a new sniping position.

He reached the last hall and ducked behind an ornate seventeenth-century four-wheeled carriage embossed with golden fruit. At least the carriages gave shelter, but they also hid Grishin. Each carriage was on a raised dais, cordoned from the public not by glass cases but ropes on vertical stands.

He peered out from behind the State coach, presented in 1600 by Elizabeth I of England to Boris Godunov,

ed to spot his enemy but the blackness of the night was complete and the coaches were only discernible as shapes.

he watched, the clouds outside the tall narrow windows parted, and a single moonbeam filtered through. The windows were burglar-proof and double-paned; it was very dim light.

et something gleamed. A tiny point in all that darkness somewhere behind the ornate and gilded wheel of the coach of Tsarina Elizabeth.

Monk tried to remember the teaching of George Sims at Castle Forbes. Two-handed, laddie, and hold it steady. Forget the OK Corral - that's fiction.

Monk raised his Sig Sauer two-handed and drew a bead on a spot four inches above the point of light. A slow breath, hold steady, fire.

The bullet went through the spokes of the wheel and hit something behind it. As the echoes drifted away and his ears ceased to ring, he heard the sliding thump of a heavy object hitting the floor.

It could be a ruse. He waited five minutes, then saw that the dim outline on the floor beside the carriage did not move. Slipping from cover to cover behind the antique wooden-framed vehicles, he moved closer until he could see a torso and a head, face down to the floor. Only then did he approach, gun at the ready, and turn the body over.

Colonel Anatoli Grishin had taken the single bullet just above the left eye. As George Sims would have said it slows them up a bit. Jason Monk looked down at the man he hated and felt nothing. It was done because it had to be done.

Pocketing his gun, he stooped, took the dead man's left hand and pulled something from it.

The small object lay in his palm in the gloom. A raw American silver that had glittered in the moonlight. The luminous turquoise hacked from the hills of the Ute or Navajo. A ring brought from the high country.

his own land, given on a park bench to a brave man at Yalta and torn from the finger of a corpse in a courtyard at Lefortovo jail.

He pocketed the ring, turned and walked back to his car. The battle of Moscow was over.

EPILOGUE

On the morning of 1 January Moscow and all Russia awoke to the grim knowledge of what had happened in their capital city. Television cameras carried the images to every corner of the sprawling land. The nation was subdued by what it saw.

Inside the Kremlin walls there was a scene of devastation. The façades of the cathedrals of the Assumption, the Annunciation and the Archangel were pitted and scarred by bullets. Broken glass glittered among the snow and ice.

Black smears from burning vehicles defaced the exteriors of the Terem and Facets Palaces, and those of the Senate and the great Kremlin Palace had been torn by machine-gun fire.

Two huddled bodies lay beneath the Tsar's Cannon, and the removal teams carried others out from the Arsenal and the Palace of Congresses where they had taken refuge in the last minutes of life.

Elsewhere the armoured personnel carriers and trucks of the Black Guards smouldered and fumed in the morning light. The flames had melted tracts of tarmac, which had then re-formed in the cold like waves of the sea.

Acting President Ivan Markov flew back at once from his vacation home, arriving shortly after midday. In the late afternoon he received the Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias in private audience.

Alexei II made his first and last intervention in the political arena of Moscow. He urged that to continue with plans for a new presidential election on 16 January would be impossible, and that the date should be consecrated to a national referendum on the issue of the restoration of the monarchy.

Ironically, Markov was very susceptible to the idea.

For one thing he was no fool. He had been appointed four years earlier to the post of premier by the late President Cherkassov as a skilled administrator, a grey suit with a background in the petroleum industry. But with time he had come to enjoy the power of executive office, even in a system where most of the power lay with the president, and much less with the premier.

In the six months since Cherkassov's fatal heart attack he had come to appreciate the panoply of high office even more.

With the Union of Patriotic Forces in ruins from an electoral standpoint, he knew the issue would be between himself and the neo-Communists of the Socialist Union. He also knew he would probably come second.

But a constitutional monarch would, as almost his first act, need to call on an experienced politician and administrator to form a government of national-unity. Who better, he reasoned, than himself?

That evening Ivan Markov by presidential decree summoned the deputies of the Duma to return to Moscow for an emergency session of the House.

During 3 January the deputies streamed back across Russia from the farthest corners of Siberia and the northern wastes of Archangel.

The emergency session of the Duma on 4 January was held in the largely undamaged White House. The mood was sombre, not least among the deputies of the Union of Patriotic Forces who were each at pains to tell anyone who would listen that they personally had had no inkling of Igor Komarov's mad act of New Year's Eve.

The session was addressed by Acting President Markov who proposed that the entire nation should still be consulted on 16 January, but concerning the issue of restoration. As he was not a member of the Duma, he could not formally propose the motion. This was done by the Speaker, a member of Markov's Democratic Alliance Party.

The neo-Communists, seeing presidential power

slipping from their grasp, opposed it with their entire voting bloc. But Markov had done his preparatory work well.

The members of the UPF, fearful for their own safety, had been interviewed privately, one by one, on the same morning. The strong impression given to each one was that if they supported the Acting President the whole question of the lifting of their parliamentary immunity from arrest could well be dropped. Such a step would mean they could keep their seats.

The Democratic Alliance votes, added to those of the Union of Patriotic Forces, outweighed the neo-Communist vote. The motion was carried.

Technically the change was not so difficult to administer. Polling booths were already in place. The sole task was to print and issue a further 105 million ballot papers bearing the simple question and two boxes, one for 'Yes' and one for 'No'.

On 5 January, in the small northern Russian port of Vyborg a dock security militiaman called Pyotr Gromov added a footnote to history. Just after dawn he was watching the Swedish freighter *Ingrid B* prepare to leave for Göteborg.

The militiaman was about to turn away and return to his cabin for breakfast when two figures in blue donkey-jackets emerged from behind a pile of crates and made for the gangway, just before it was hauled up. On a hunch he called on them to stop.

The two men had a brief, muttered conversation and then ran for the gangway. Gromov pulled his gun and fired a warning shot in the air. It was the first time he had used it in three years on the docks, and it pleased him mightily to do so. The two seamen stopped.

Their papers revealed both were Swedes. The younger man spoke English, of which Gromov had a few words. But he had worked long enough on the docks to have a better grasp of Swedish. To the older man he snapped: 'So what was the hurry?'

The man said not a word. Neither of them had understood him. He reached out and tore off the older man's round fur hat. Something familiar about the face. He had seen it before. The militiaman and the fleeing Russian stared at each other. That face . . . on a podium . . . shouting at the cheering crowd.

'I know you,' he said, 'you're Igor Komarov.'

Komarov and Kuznetsov were arrested and brought back to Moscow. The former leader of the UPF was at once indicted for high treason and remanded in custody pending trial. Ironically he was lodged in Lefortovo jail.

For ten days the national debate occupied the newspapers; magazines, airwaves and TV channels as pundit after pundit intoned his or her opinion.

On the afternoon of Friday 14 January Father Gregor Rusakov held a revivalist rally in the Olympic Stadium in Moscow. As with Komarov when he had spoken there, his address was carried across the nation reaching, so the pollsters later estimated, eighty million Russians.

His theme was simple and clear. For seventy years the Russian people had worshipped the twin gods of dialectical materialism and Communism and had been betrayed by both. For fifteen years they had attended at the temple of republican capitalism and seen their hopes traduced. He urged his listeners on the morrow to go back to the God of their fathers, to go to church and pray for guidance.

Foreign observers have long had the impression that after seventy years of Communist industrialization the Russians are a mainly city-dwelling people. It is a mistaken assumption. Even by the winter of 1999 over 50 per cent of Russians still lived largely unseen and unrecorded in the small towns, villages and countryside, that vast spread of land from Belarus to Vladivostok, running through 6,000 miles and nine time zones.

Within that unseen land are the 100,000 parishes that comprise the hundred bishoprics of the Russian Orthodox Church, each with its large or small

invited, the fifty-seven-year-old prince of the British House of Windsor.

Far away in the west, in a former coach-house outside the village of Langton Matravers, Sir Nigel Irvine watched the ceremony on television.

In the kitchen Lady Irvine was washing up the breakfast dishes, something she always did before her 'dustbuster', Mrs Moir, came in to clean.

'What are you watching, Nigel?' she called as she let the soapy water out of the sink. 'You never look at television in the mornings.'

'Something going on in Russia, my dear.'

It had been, he thought, a close-run thing. He had followed his own principles for the destruction of a richer, stronger and more numerous adversary by the use of minimum forces, a destruction that could only be accomplished by guile and deception.

His first stage had been to require Jason Monk to create a loose alliance of those liable to fear or despise Igor Komarov after seeing the Black Manifesto. In the first category came those destined for destruction by the Russian Nazi - the Chechens, Jews and militia who had persecuted Komarov's ally, the mafia. In the second came the Church and the Army, represented by the Patriarch and the most prestigious living general, Nikolai Nikolayev.

The next task had been to insert an informer into the enemy camp, not to bring out reliable information but to insert disinformation.

While Monk was still training at Castle Forbes, the spymaster had made his first unnoticed visit to Moscow to reactivate two long-time low-level sleeper agents he had recruited years earlier. One was the former Moscow University professor whose use of homing pigeons had proved helpful in the past.

But when the professor had lost his job for proposing democratic reforms under the Communists, his son had also lost his high-school place and any chance of going to university. The young man had drifted into the church

tape-recording of the supposed conversation between Monk and Alexei II.

Genuine voice samples of the Patriarch had been obtained during Irvine's first visit, because his interpreter Brian Vincent had been wired for sound. Monk had recorded hours of tape in his own voice while at Castle Forbes.

In London a Russian mimic and actor had provided the words that Alexei II apparently spoke on the tape. With computerized sound technology the tape had been created, right down to the stirring of coffee cups. Father Maxim, to whom Irvine had palmed the tape as he passed in the hall, had simply played it from one recorder into the one given him by Grishin.

Everything on the tape was a lie. General Petrovsky could not have continued his raids on the Dolgoruki gang because all the knowledge Monk had gleaned from the Chechens about the rival mafia had already been passed to him. Moreover, the papers from beneath the casino contained no evidence of Dolgoruki funding of the UPF election campaign.

General Nikolayev had no intention of continuing to denounce Komarov in a series of interviews after New Year's Day. He had said his piece, and once was enough.

Most importantly, the Patriarch had not the slightest intention of intervening with the Acting President to urge that Komarov be declared an unfit person. He had made quite clear that he would not intervene in politics.

But neither Grishin nor Komarov knew this. Believing they had their opponents' intentions in their grasp and faced a fearful danger, they overreacted badly and launched four assassination attempts. Suspecting they were coming, Monk could warn all four targets. Only one refused to heed the warning. Until the night of 21 December, and possibly even later, Komarov could still have won the election with a handsome majority.

After 21 December came stage five. The overreaction was exploited by Monk to broaden the hostility against Komarov from the tiny few who had seen the Black

and very dangerous attack. So they lost their nerve and ran.'

Not only did they run, but in the darkness they began hacking at each other. By another kind of disinformation, Grishin was persuaded to arrest his own entire high command.

Lady Irvine came in and switched off the TV.

'Come along, Nigel, it's a lovely day and we have to dig in the early potatoes.'

The spymaster pulled himself to his feet.

'Of course,' he said, 'the spring earlies. I'll get my boots.'

He hated digging, but he did love Penny Irvine very much.

It was just after midday when the *Foxy Lady* came out of Turtle Cove and headed for the Cut.

Halfway to the reef Arthur Dean swept up alongside in the *Silver Deep*. He had two tourist divers in the stern.

'Hey, Jason, you been away!'

'Yep. Went over to Europe for a spell.'

'How was it?'

Monk thought that one over. 'Interesting,' he said.

'Good to see you back.' Dean glanced into the after-deck of the *Foxy Lady*. 'You don't have a charter?'

'Nope. There are wahoo running ten miles off the Point. I'm going to take some just for me.'

Arthur Dean grinned, recognizing the feeling. 'Tight lines, man.'

The *Silver Deep* opened her throttle and sped away. The *Foxy Lady* moved through the Cut and Monk felt the thump and surge of the open sea beneath his feet, and the sweet-smelling salted wind on his face.

Pushing on the power he turned the *Foxy Lady* away from the islands and out towards the lonely sea and the sky.

THE FIST OF GOD

by Frederick Forsyth

During those fateful weeks before Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, a fragment of radio intercept he referred to *Qubth-ut-Allah*, a devastating secret weapon that could rain death and destruction on the Allied forces.

Despite Allied scepticism, Major Mike Martin, an SAS man who can pass as an Arab, is sent into Kuwait to assess Iraqi strength and help the resistance. What he discovers there takes him into the heart of Baghdad where he is to 'run' the Iraqi spy known as Jericho, a sleeper who might be prepared to provide vital information for money. It was a highly dangerous operation, the results of which cause the Allies to delay their ground assault for four days - while Martin parachutes into the Iraqi mountains on the most hazardous mission of his life to find and destroy Qubth-ut-Allah - the Fist of God.

Frederick Forsyth's research has never been less than awe-inspiring. In this, his latest superthriller, his incomparable authority is everywhere evident in this powerful novel that only he could have written. Not until you read *THE FIST OF GOD* will you realise why Saddam Hussein thought he could win the Gulf War and why he refused to pull out of Kuwait.

THE DECEIVER

by Frederick Forsyth

Sam McCready is *The Deceiver*, one of the Special Intelligence Service's most unorthodox and most valued operatives, a legend in his own time. The end of the cold war has, however, strengthened the hand of the Whitehall mandarins, to whom he seems about as controllable as Genghis Khan, so Sam is to have his fate decided at a special hearing.

As part of the proceedings, four of Sam's key operations are reviewed: a clandestine mission into East Germany in 1985 to contact the top Russian spy General Pankratin; the second involving a KGB colonel who wants to defect - but is he genuine? An audacious Gaddafi-inspired plot to ship arms to the IRA; and the fourth when McCready presided over the aftermath of political murder and mayhem in the Caribbean.

Following the world-wide triumph of *The Negotiator*, the master returns with a keenly perceptive view of British Intelligence in the eighties featuring one of his most memorable characters - *The Deceiver*, Sam McCready.

